The Next Chapter

In the name of safeguarding:
The education experiences of children experiencing extra-familial harm

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This project is part of the Contextual Safeguarding programme's 'The Next Chapter' project. The Contextual Safeguarding research programme is based at Durham University.

For more information about the research and to find resources from this project please visit: www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

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Introduction

Extra-familial harm is an umbrella term that refers to harm that happens to young people away from their families. It includes harm that happens to young people in their communities, for example, sexual harassment between students at school, the grooming of young people to traffic drugs or violence that can happen on the street. We know that that there is a strong relationship between school exclusion and extra-familial harm (Arnez & Condry, 2021). School exclusion has been linked to involvement in serious youth violence (Home Office, 2018), and so-called 'gang violence' (Williams & Finlay, 2019). Young people excluded from school have been found to be more vulnerable to being criminally exploited and vice-versa (Just for Law Kids, 2020). Exclusions away from 'mainstream' school life can start a series of events that move young people away from the conventional ties of peers, their daily lives or places they spend time (like schools) and can significantly impact their life and opportunities (Berridge et al., 2001). Yet while research from an education perspective has considered what happens to young people that are excluded (for example their educational attainment of contact with youth justice) little is known about the education experiences of young people that are experiencing extra-familial harm. That is, forms of harm that happen in young people's communities, from their peers and friends and adults outside of their families. If we know that exclusion can exasperate and create vulnerabilities for children and young people, what about those children already impacted by some of the most serious and harmful forms of abuse and harm?

Those working with children impacted by extra-familial harm have spoken about how decisions about school exclusions are sometimes taken "in the name of safeguarding". That is, as a means of keeping other students safe from the influence of violence and harm that can be associated with children experiencing criminal exploitation, youth violence or sexual exploitation. If true, it is important that educational decisions about children and young people impacted by extra-familial harm are sensitive to, and promote, the best interests of those children and their welfare, including decisions about whether to exclude them. It is essential that those whose task it is to protect children from harm (safeguarding professionals), and those tasked with promoting their access to education, work together.

This report presents data from the first study of its kind looking at the education experiences of children impacted by extra-familial harm. By collecting data from 17 local authorities in England and Wales, we can also start to see an emerging picture of how safeguarding professionals are responding to the issue of extra-familial harm and importantly, who they think is impacted by it. The data starts to show the complex relationship between how systems ostensibly designed to keep young people safe can themselves adversely impact different young people.

A note before we begin

This report looks at the experiences of young people impacted by extra-familial harm and their experiences of education and exclusion. In this project it was important to understand what was happening for children considered to be experiencing some of the most extreme forms of extra-familial harm and abuse – defined for this project as those in receipt of a social care response. Because of the unique focus on social care, interview participants were drawn predominantly from social care as opposed to education. The aim of this report is not to pit social care against education but rather, with curiosity, understand what systemic and structural challenges may limit the education experiences of this group of young people.

Because this report holds insights into the children discussed at social care panels, it can help us start to unpick and understand what might be happening in social care more broadly that leads safeguarding colleagues to consider particular groups of children as in need. This report is interested in structures and systems and how they shape what we do as professionals and individuals. We – the Contextual Safeguarding programme – want to understand how systems operate in specific contexts and what influences these contexts. It is not about pointing the finger at 'bad practice' or 'bad practitioners' but using this knowledge to change systems for the better. With that in mind it is important to acknowledge the extremely difficult circumstances that education and social care colleagues are operating within and the ultimate need for investment.

When reading this report, I want you to hold two questions in mind when looking at the findings. Ask yourself: "what structures or systems are leading to this?" and "what does this tell us about the culture of these organisations?". It is through asking these questions that we can be supported to apply these findings in practice and move beyond blaming individuals, to understanding the systems, structures and cultures that create them.

What structures are leading to this?

What does this tell us about the culture of the organisations?

Headline findings

- Children and young people were mostly considered to be experiencing child criminal exploitation. (Page 17)

- Racially minoritised children and young people were disproportionately considered to be experiencing extra-familial harm relative to local population ethnicity. (Page 17)

- Racially minoritised young people were much more likely to be considered to be impacted by 'serious youth violence' and 'gang affiliation' than non-racially minoritised young people . (Page 18)

- Over half of children and young people were not in mainstream education provision while 45% were educated in mainstream settings. (Page 19)

- The vast majority of children and young people had experienced some type of exclusion at school. A fifth had experienced permanent exclusion. (Page 20)

- Twice as many boys than girls experienced permanent exclusion. More girls experienced fixed-period exclusions and reduced timetables than boys. (Page 21)

- The education experiences of a quarter of racially minoritised children were not known. (Page 21)

- 'Disruptive behaviour' and 'attendance and punctuality' were the most common reasons given for why a child experienced permanent exclusion or any form of exclusions. (Page 26)

- Children and young people were excluded for reasons that were strongly associated to their experiences of extra-familial harm. (Page 27)

Language

This report is substantively based on quantitative data. Quantitative data is information that can be counted or measured. Numbers can be really helpful for helping us to build a picture of the common things that happen because they can show us patterns. But, when reporting this type of information it can be easy to slip into using language that turns children's experiences into numbers. A child becomes a case, or their social care status their ethnicity or their age. We can lose sight of the brilliant diversity of children. At the same time, to be able to analyse data – that means the process of understanding things or discovering things – it can be helpful to use groups and categories. Sometimes this means we lose some of the beautiful difference between things, with the aim of finding out if other important things are happening, for example, patterns or trends. I have had to do this in some places in this report to help understand some of the things that might be happening – and I explain why and how I did this when it happens.

Because language is important, I start by explaining some key terms that are used throughout. You will also notice that I have written this report in the first person. That means I use the term 'I'. This is a little bit different to other reports that don't usually say who is doing what (called the passive voice). I – Jenny Lloyd – am using 'I' where appropriate because I think it is important to understand that the research was done and the findings were created by someone, and this influences the analysis and the findings.

Before explaining some key terms, it is important to note that this report is based on 131 'cases'. Really that is 131 children and young people. Brilliant children whose lives are important and exciting and complicated and that can't be measured by numbers. But it is through looking at these children's lives together – through numbers – that we can start to see a story emerge about what happens in schools and by social care when children experience harm.

Some notes on language and terms

In this report, the language used to describe some things was determined by the information provided to me by participating local authorities. I recorded information in the survey using the same language that was provided by the social care departments that participated. For example, the words used to describe children's race and ethnicity or the categories used to record gender. In some places this language was problematic. There are a few instances in this report where those terms are used in order to preserve the original data set. For example 'other' as a category of gender.

Cases vs children and young people

Cases is a term that is often problematically used to describe children and young people that are involved with different services. But children are not cases. However, children are also not the numbers used to describe them. In this report I use the term 'case' sparingly when describing the 'data' or information that was held on social care records and provided as part of the survey. In all other instances I use children or young people.

Children perceived as experiencing extra-familial harm

This research is about children experiencing extra-familial harm. It was not the purpose of this project to identify if the children in this sample were really experiencing extra-familial harm. It is important to hold in mind that this sample is a sample of children where social care and other professionals *think* they are experiencing extra-familial harm rather than necessarily are experiencing it. This is an important distinction considering the significance that social care involvement and exclusion can have on children and young people's lives. Yet in the interest of conciseness and for ease of reading I use the term 'children experiencing extra-familial harm' rather than 'children that are perceived as experiencing extra-familial harm' except in instances where making this distinction is particularly pertinent.

Exclusion

Participants were asked to collect information in relation to whether a child had ever experienced any, of a list, of decisions/events (see Appendix A question 22). The resulting list included a range of experiences such as permanent exclusion, fixed-period exclusion, managed move, etc. As all of these involved a child being taken out of the main learning environment, 'exclusion' is used as a broad term to describe these decisions/events across the exclusion continuum.

Extra-familial harm

This is a blanket term used to describe harm that, usually, happens away from young people's families. It includes harm in their communities and from peers. For example, criminal exploitation, sexual harm and exploitation and violence.

Fixed-period exclusions

All sites referred to fixed-period exclusions as opposed to 'suspensions' – the term now used by the Department for Education. Fixed-period exclusions is therefore used instead of suspensions.

N=

When you see n= it tells you how many of something you had in a sample. So, for example, if I say 75% of children don't like pizza (n=3) it tells you that it was 3 young people that didn't like pizza.

Racially minoritised young people and non-racially minoritised young people

In the original dataset there were 18 different types of race and ethnicity recorded. Because of the relatively small data set of 131 it would be difficult to do any analysis that looks at racial bias or systemic or structural harm (for example if social care systems were causing harm because of things like racism) without grouping some of these recorded race and ethnicity types. Therefore it was important to group the information into smaller categories (Ross et al., 2020). While there are problems with categorising race and ethnicity, in this report I use 'racially minoritised' and 'non-racially minoritised' to group different race and ethnicities into categories that can be analysed.

Social care oversight and panels

Most of the information collected in the survey came from 'panels' (n=15). In this research panels were meetings with different multi-agency partners (e.g., the social care, the police, education, health etc.) where children experiencing extra-familial harm were discussed. In this study two authorities did not hold panels and instead selected cases of children impacted by extra-familial harm in a different way. For example, by choosing a number of children who were being seen as part of an exploitation service. As data was provided in two different ways the term 'social care oversight' is used as a broad category to refer to the children discussed in this study. It is important to note that most of this information is based on panels.

Structural and systemic harm

In this report I talk about structural and systemic harm. Structural forms of harm are harms where social structures prevent people meeting their basic needs. This can include forms of harm such as racism, ableism, sexism and classism (among others). Systemic harms can be forms of harm that are caused by systems themselves (often shaped by structural harms). For example, the exclusion of children from education can be considered a form of systemic harm. The fact that exclusion in the UK happens disproportionately to, for example, Black Caribbean children, is evidence of a form of systemic and structural harm.

Methodology

Data collection was undertaken from June 2022 until September 2023. The research focussed on answering four key questions:

1. How does social care address extra-familial harm and who do they consider as impacted by it?
2. What are the education situations and experiences of young people experiencing extra-familial harm?
3. If and why are children impacted by extra-familial harm excluded or moved from school?
4. What are people doing to make schools safer for young people experiencing extra-familial harm?

Three research methods were used to gather data: a survey, follow-up interview and case study/general interview. A survey was undertaken with 17 local authorities across England and Wales to understand the education experiences of children experiencing extra-familial harm. Participating local authorities were asked to put forward a contact from the authority with social care oversight of children impacted by extra-familial harm. In most cases this was the Chair of an exploitation panel. For example, the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel (MACE). Participating authorities were asked to collect data to answer the survey. Once they collected data, they provided the information during an online interview.

Participants collected data on children impacted by extra-familial harm. The selection criteria involved identifying children that were discussed at a panel about extra-familial harm. Each participating authority was asked to access the minutes of the first panel meeting discussing children impacted by extra-familial harm in November 2022. In 7 authorities this was a MACE meeting, 8 authorities had meetings with different names (but were broadly similar to MACE), two authorities did not hold panels to discuss cases of extra-familial harm specifically. In these two authorities the participant was asked to choose cases based on a list of children held in the service at that time. The aim of this overall sampling strategy was to:

- Include children that met a threshold to be discussed at an extra-familial harm panel. i.e. practitioners were concerned enough about these young people that they were discussed at a multi-agency panel;
- To ensure that practitioners didn't individually select children;
- To provide comparability in terms of date and time of year;

Participants were then asked to collect data about the children that were discussed at that panel or identified by other means (as above). The complete list of questions can be found in Appendix A. Broadly the questions focussed on:

- The panel: frequency, types of harm discussed and Chairing arrangements.
- Demographics of the children: age, gender, ethnicity, disability, EHCP status, social care status, schooling (at the time of the meeting), previous education decisions (i.e. exclusions and moves), reasons for exclusions, impact on safeguarding.
- The ease of access to information.

Participating authorities were recruited via the Contextual Safeguarding newsletter, direct contact to previous research participants and via social media.

Participants were invited to take part in a short follow-up interview directly after the survey. The interview focussed on any reflections following the survey process, for example anything that was surprising about the data or anything they felt was important to share to contextualise the data. I also asked questions about the relationship between education and extra-familial harm and anything they felt was working well or could be improved in their authority. 13 interviews/focus groups were conducted in total with some only participating in the interview and not the survey.

The third method involved conducting a case study interview with two participating organisations who asked to discuss practical ways they were creating safer school environments for children experiencing extra-familial harm. These case studies are shared on the Contextual Safeguarding website.

This report presents findings from the survey and interviews.

Participating authorities

17 authorities took part in the survey including 3 from Wales and 14 from England. Five London boroughs participated. Three authorities were large rural areas, and there was representation from the north-east, north-west, midlands, south-coast and south-west. Four of the authorities had worked extensively with the Contextual Safeguarding programme previously to re-design their social care response to extra-familial harm.

Ethics

This project was overseen and strengthened by the involvement of a Research Advisory Board. The members of this board included: Jasmina Arnez (Oxford University), Shaun Brown (The Difference), Vicki Clements (Knowsley Council), Jill Bowe (Villa Real school), Helen Knowler (UCL), Lesley O'Hagan (Bristol City Council), Dunston Patterson (Youth Justice Board) and James Sykes (Hackney Council).

Limitations

This small-scale mixed-methods study is the first of its kind looking at the education experiences of children and young people experiencing extra-familial harm from a social care perspective. The data from the survey reports findings from 17 authorities in England and Wales which approximately represent 5% of English and Welsh authorities. The findings do not seek to be representative of the wider national context but provide the first insights of its kind into the issue of extra-familial harm and education that are important for further research. Broad limitations are listed below, however, footnotes are provided throughout where particular limitations or clarifying information related to the methodology may be helpful to the interpretation of some findings.

The data that was easiest to access was data related to the children discussed at the panels and the demographic information relating to them. Because of this, we can be very confident in the accuracy of the findings about how social care addresses extra-familial harm and who they consider as impacted by it. Because some participating authorities found it hard to access information about the children and young people's education experiences (a finding in itself) it is harder to draw strong conclusions about some of this data (noted in footnotes where necessary). The findings here provide helpful insights into what might be happening, with scope for further research. Some specific limitations are listed below:

Data about exclusions

The survey collected data on young people's current education placements and historical experiences of exclusion. Participants found it hard to collect data about children's experiences of exclusion. For most participants this data was not available on social care systems with most having to ask education colleagues to access this data. Schools are required to report information on exclusions, such as permanent exclusions and fixed-period exclusions to the Department for Education. However, there are variations in how schools record these. For example, rather than recording fixed-period exclusions (suspensions) a range of other measures might be used that ultimately prevent children being in school (for example being asked to go home early). Furthermore, all sites were asked about internal exclusions, but no site returned results for these. It is likely that the true extent of exclusions may be hidden.

Challenges and variations of social care accessing information on exclusion also impacts the analysis of the reasons for exclusion. This question asked participants to offer a narrative about the reasons children had been excluded, if they had. Many of these responses were taken directly from education systems and therefore use standardised terms e.g., 'persistent disruptive behaviour'. Whereas in other places participants drew on their knowledge, or the knowledge of other practitioners, who recounted longer narratives based on what they knew of the child's experiences.

The research methodology was focussed on finding out about children experiencing extra-familial harm. While this can be a broad group of children, the focus of this research was on those considered to be experiencing particularly high levels of harm or abuse. The threshold for determining this was children discussed at a social care panel for their experiences of extra-familial harm. Data for this project was predominantly accessed via social care colleagues as opposed to targeting schools and education providers. It is for this reason that the findings paint a partial picture of what is happening from the perspective of social care. Further research should explore these issues with education.

Findings

This report is primarily focussed on quantitative data. However, it is important to understand that behind these numbers lie the stories and experiences of real people. To hold this in mind this report begins with some stories about the education experiences of children experiencing extra-familial harm and the professionals working with them shared as part of the interviews.

"it seems to be there is this accountability to the other students, to the parents of somebody else, but never to the child who we are most worried about. The child who is going to die is the one who gets excluded. Cos that's the child who is, who is telling us, through their behaviour, 'I'm the one who's the most at risk; I'm carrying a knife. I've gone missing; I've been found with loads of drugs on me, they've been seized; I'm not telling you in words, but I've got all these- it's all there on display to you that I am in need of protection, but instead of protecting me in this school, you're actually gonna remove me and put me in a place where I don't know anybody; there could be rival gang members there. I'm gonna have to navigate new relationships when I'm already experiencing loads of trauma; you're taking me away from my friends; you're disrupting my education. I'm not gonna go, you know? And then I might have to travel a long distance to get to that school as well; so you're actually creating further harm for me by not creating safety in that place, in a mainstream school setting". (Interview)

"They are expected to manage such complexity and still judged on the educational outcomes of those children who are experiencing any number of incredibly traumatic events and they don't have the resource to respond". (Interview)

"So, especially when you've got kids who maybe use violence within the schools, schools need to be seen to be responding appropriately. And what people need to see happening is there being 'punishment' for pupils that might be, you know, displaying violence in the school. So, they've got a really tough job of trying to please and appease everyone, all pupils and all parents. So, it's a really tough undertaking and I think it takes like a cultural shift and that cultural shift takes a long, long time". (Interview)

"We had a really serious incident where a child nearly died outside a community centre, a youth club, just a few doors up from the school a few weeks ago. You know, dealing with this on a daily basis is difficult and I think schools sometimes feel that they've got no option but to exclude some of these children." (Interview)

"I think there's still a kind of conceptual problem with exploitation and the kind of victimhood of the children involved. I think they are still seen, especially around criminal exploitation, far greater seen as a risk, and a problem themselves, that needs to be kind of 'got rid of', rather than seeing them as a victim that needs to be held and for safety to be improved, and that's again, serious youth violence. As soon as serious youth violence comes up, it's about fighting, it's about knives, it's immediately... it's about the risk that they pose to every child in the school, including adults. Yeah, and so children who experience sexual exploitation are, you know, their victimhood is acknowledged very, you know, much, much, much easier, than a fifteen year-old boy who has, who has had a knife in the community."
(Interview)

Demographics

The information collected from the survey provides a window into how social care departments viewed the issue of extra-familial harm and which children met a threshold for discussion at panel or within an exploitation team in November 2022. Demographic information tells us who safeguarding professionals considered to be experiencing extra-familial harm and most 'at risk'.

The survey captured information from 17 different authorities about 131 different children and young people.
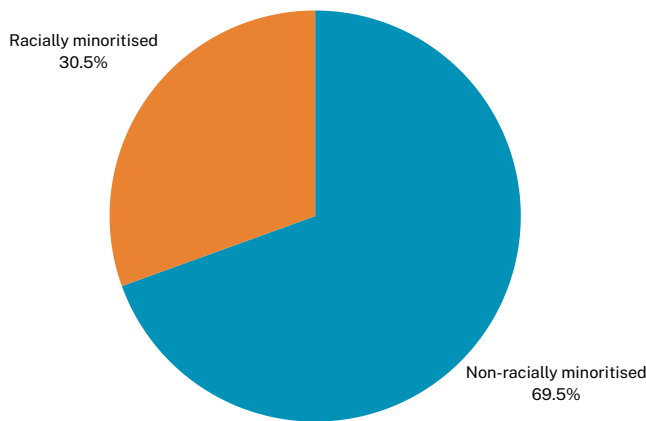
Age

11-18 with an average age of 15.03

Ethnicity

Racially minoritised
30.5%

Non-racially minoritised
69.5%

Figure 1.1 Breakdown by 'racial group'

Gender

Other
0.8%

Female
31.3%

Male
67.9%
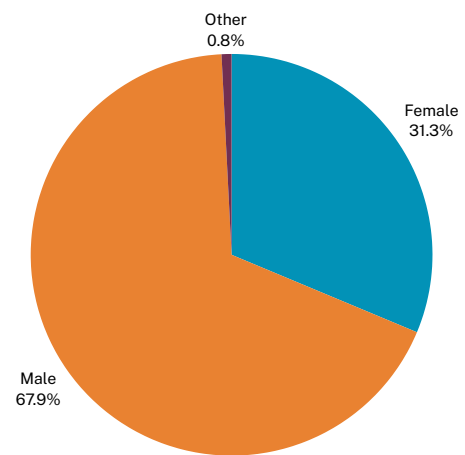
Figure 1.2 Breakdown by gender

Social care status

Not open to social care
6.9%

Other
2%

Child in care
21.8%

Child protection
20.8%

Child in need
44.6%
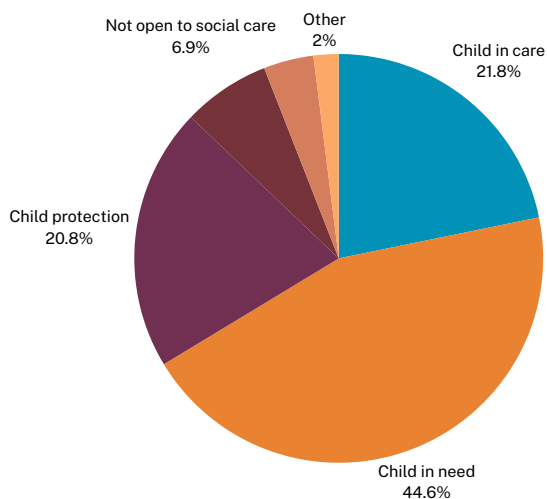
Figure 1.3 Breakdown by social care status

Disability

Disability
23%
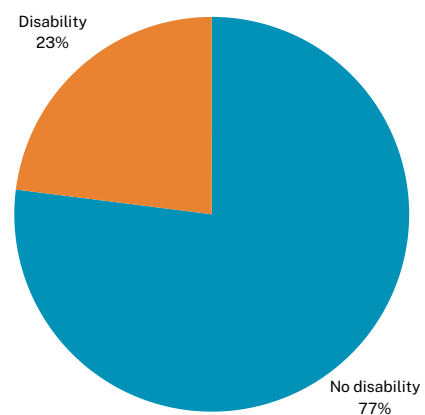
No disability
77%

Figure 1.4 Breakdown by disability

What did we learn about how social care addresses extra-familial harm and who they considered to be impacted by it?

Social work colleagues found it difficult to access information about children experiencing extra-familial harm's education experiences.

Participants noted during the interview process that it was very difficult for them to access information about children and young people's past education experiences because this was not routinely recorded on social care systems. Most participants were able to access information about children's current education provision but information about exclusions or moves was not readily available to them. In most sites, information about exclusions was sought through contacting education colleagues who had access to an education recording system. For others, this information was found written in individual social care case notes (only available through reading them). In only one site was the information available from the minutes of the panel discussion. The impact of this is that it is hard to accurately capture the full extent to which children had experienced exclusion or moves. It is likely that the data underrepresents the true picture of exclusion for children. Ultimately, few of the 17 participating authorities had a good understanding of a child's education experiences and did not have systems set up in ways that readily allowed workers to access this information.

Generally, interview participants noted varied relationships in their areas between schools and social care. Many suggested that some schools had good relationships with social care whereas other schools did not readily engage with social care when decisions were being made about children and young people. Overwhelmingly participants did not feel they could change the decisions of schools if an exclusion was likely:

> For social workers, it can sometimes feel like if [schools have] made the decision to go to- to permanently exclude, they've made that decision. And whatever panel happens or whatever discussion happens with governors, they've already made up their minds. Nothing I say is gonna make a difference to that. And that can feel quite disempowering at times. (Social worker)

Multiple interview participants noted a lack of consistency in approaches between schools and challenges of academisation making it hard for social work to work together with education to inform decision making:

> Depending where [a child] might live or which school you might go, where that school sits, you might have a very different response and where you may get different support. You might be identified in a very different way, and obviously everything else to follow will be very different. (Education worker)

> There's a lot of academies in [area]; and it very much feels like there's no consistency in their approach. We've got the [Local authority education department], but it doesn't have any authority over any of these schools, to hold them to account. You know if we've got concerns about an exclusion or about the way that a school might be treating a child, then to advocate for that young person, I don't think that those avenues are clear. (Social worker)

Interview participants also highlighted the challenges of supporting schools to attend safeguarding meetings and the reality of the different remits and roles of social workers, schools and the police. Another participate raised their concerns about the unintended consequences of improved information sharing between social care and education. They suggested that the risk-averse nature of some schools could result in further exclusions of children if schools became more aware of a child's experiences of extra-familial harm outside of school. They noted previous experiences of unsubstantiated information sharing between the police and schools about children and how this had resulted in schools excluding students:

> There was an issue when we started, say three years ago, where information sharing for the police was pretty open, which then meant that schools were often getting kind of information, police information about kids that was a bit decontextualised, right, and it was leading them [schools] to be quite risk averse. Because they might see it as this child has got a new risk, you know, a large amount of appearances on the police system, regardless of whether they've been charged with anything, regardless of whether it's got evidential weight or whatever, and this was leading to the schools just being like, 'why do we need to... we can't keep this child, they're too high risk. (Education worker)

The sense that schools were 'risk averse' and not supported to manage the risks associated with extra-familial harm was shared by the majority of participants:

> There's a large amount of risk aversion, when it comes to issues around, kind of, exploitation, and serious youth violence, and I think the perception of schools' capacities to be able to manage it is very low. (Education worker)

One participant noted that despite the unique challenges and vulnerabilities that experiencing extra-familial harm can have for a young person, recognition of this did not bring additional funding for students within schools. They noted that schools are often left to create resource intensive safety plans with no additional resources:

> Being at risk of exploitation or serious violence being another kind of, sort of, category of vulnerability, so to speak, isn't really kind of acknowledged and given the same level of, as you say, funding. Mostly, we're going to schools and saying, 'this child is particularly vulnerable', and then, you know, you'd like to see a situation in which they are particularly vulnerable and therefore are liable to receiving this additional pot of funding. They can help you manage them, but actually you'll just suggest all we're really able to do is tell them that they're actually very vulnerable in a different way to other children, and that vulnerability could come in and cause issues in your school, by bringing violence into it, by bringing drugs into it, by potentially bringing outside influences into school or fights outside of the school, these sorts of things. And so actually you are identifying them 'at risk' in such a way that you'd actually be putting the school in a level of, kind of, concern, I think, concern for themselves and concern for their settings and cohort, rather than saying, 'okay, well now we've got a whole range of additional resources to help you to support them'. (Education worker)

Most participating authorities used panels as a way to risk manage extra-familial harm.

The findings of the survey highlighted that social care panels were mostly used for discussing children impacted by extra-familial harm. 15 authorities held panels to discuss children they were particularly worried about experiencing extra-familial harm. Most panels (n=8) were held monthly. Despite variations in names (7 were MACE) the panels appeared to focus on the same issues. All panels (n=15) focussed on child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE) with some panels focussing on different harm types for example: trafficking (n=11), serious youth violence (n=10), modern slavery (n=9), harmful sexual behaviour (n=8) and radicalisation (n=3). In November 2022 the average number of children discussed at the panels was 6.73 with a range from 2-14.

Children and young people were mostly considered to be experiencing child criminal exploitation.

All the children in the survey were either considered to be experiencing CCE or CSE. While the data showed that some children were impacted by other forms of harm, for all 131 children, the concerns were predominantly about CSE or CCE. The majority of children discussed at panels were considered to be experiencing CCE (71%) with a third thought to be experiencing CSE (29%). In addition to these types of extra-familial harm, children were noted as experiencing other forms or indicators of extra-familial harm, including: missing (19%), gang affiliation (9%), serious youth violence (8%), trafficking (8%), anti-social behaviour (7%), modern slavery (2%), harmful sexual behaviour (2%), radicalisation (1%) and Other (2%).

The majority of children and young people recorded as experiencing child criminal exploitation were male while the majority of those experiencing child sexual exploitation were female.

In cases where children and young people were recorded as experiencing CCE, 85% were male compared to 15% that were female. Where children were recorded as experiencing CSE 89% were female and 8% were male. The result of this is that more boys were discussed at panels than girls with 67.9% of cases being about boys, 31.3% of cases being about girls and 0.8% described as having 'other' gender. Similar findings were reflected when data about girls and boys were analysed. Of the boys in the sample 89% were considered to be impacted by CCE and of the girls 83% were considered to be impacted by CSE.

Racially minoritised children and young people were disproportionately considered to be experiencing extra-familial harm relative to local population ethnicity.

Racially minoritised young people represented 31% of all the children and young people included in the survey. This is three times higher than what could be expected if children with social-care oversight were proportionate to the local population ethnicity which was estimated to be 11% for the 17 areas based on census data (see Appendix B). In 11 authorities the proportion of racially minoritised children and young people with social care oversight was higher than census data. In 7 of these areas the ratio was significantly higher, meaning that there were more children and young people from a racially minoritised group than should be expected if in proportional to the local population. In the 6 other authorities the numbers of non-racially minoritised children was too small to draw conclusions. In five of these sites the number of racially minoritised people, as based on census data, was below 5% of the population.

Racially minoritised young people were much more likely to be considered to be impacted by 'serious youth violence' and 'gang affiliation' than non-racially minoritised young people .

Of the ten cases of 'serious youth violence', nine of the young people were from a racially minoritised group. This meant that of all the young people from a racially minoritised group in the survey, 23% were considered to be experiencing 'serious youth violence' compared to 1% of the non-racially minoritised young people included in the survey. Of the 12 cases noted as impacted by 'gang affiliation' nine were from a racially minoritised group meaning 23% of young people from a racially minoritised group in the survey were considered as impacted by 'gang affiliation' compared to 3% of young people from a non-racially minoritised group. Slightly more young people from a racially minoritised group were considered to be impacted by CCE than non-racially minoritised young people (78% compared to 68%). Of the nine young people described as impacted by 'anti-social behaviour' all were from a non-racially minoritised group. Such differences were not seen in the sample of children impacted by CSE. A third of non-racially minoritised young people were considered to be experiencing CSE compared to 25% of racially minoritised young people.

Biases in how young people were labelled and viewed were described by interview participants. One participant noted how racist perceptions influenced who was labelled as part of a gang:

> One thing we see a lot of, in [area], is the use of the term 'gang' for groups of Black kids, and we don't see the use of the word 'gang' for groups of white kids in the south who are doing exactly the same behaviours. (Education worker)

Another noted how the intersections of gender, race and arguably class influenced how harm was perceived and addressed:

> I think that there's also a racial element to this, as well. So in a particular school we saw lots of girls who were taking Xanax and you know, other Class A drugs; were not getting excluded, they were getting [mental health] referrals, whereas a boy would come in, typically a Black boy, with a bag of cannabis and all of a sudden that's a 'gangs and exploitation' issue (Social worker)
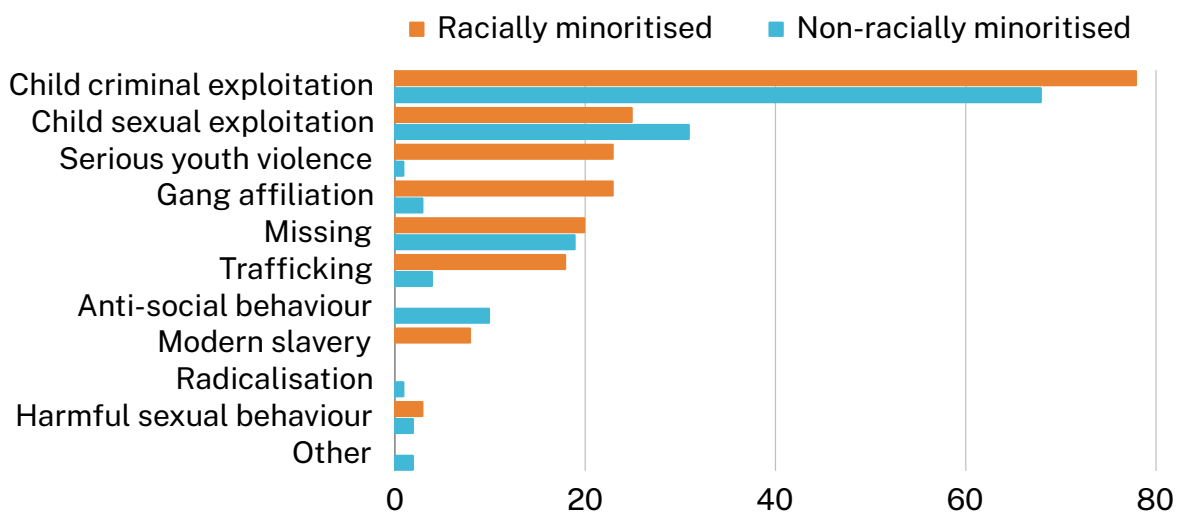

Figure 2.1 Harm type experienced by racial group

Note: Young people could experience multiple types of harm. The percentages provided in figure 2.1 are for the proportion of each racial group that had experienced that form of harm. For example 23% of all racially minoritised young people were considered to be impacted by 'gang affiliation'.

What did we learn about the education experiences of children and young people experiencing extra-familial harm?

Participants were asked to collect data on the education placements of young people with social care oversight in November 2022 and their education experiences prior to this, including any historical information. Education experiences included things such as permanent exclusion, managed moves etc.

Over half of children and young people were not in mainstream education provision while 45% were educated in mainstream settings.

45% of children included in the survey were in mainstream education provision in November 2022. 24% were in alternative settings, 18% were Not in Education, Employment of Training (referred to as 'NEET'), 5% were with special education providers, 3% were on dual placements, 3% were electively home educated, the education provision was not known for 2%, and 1% were employed. These findings appear to be particularly impacted by variations between participating authorities. For example, Site 5 provided information for 11 children and Site 16 provided information for 14 children meaning they collectively represent 22% of the survey sample. However, the average number of cases provided by the 17 sites was 6.73. In site 5 all but one young person were in mainstream education (one young person was in a Special Educational setting). In site 16, 11 young people were in mainstream education, one young person was in alternative provision and two were in Special Education settings.
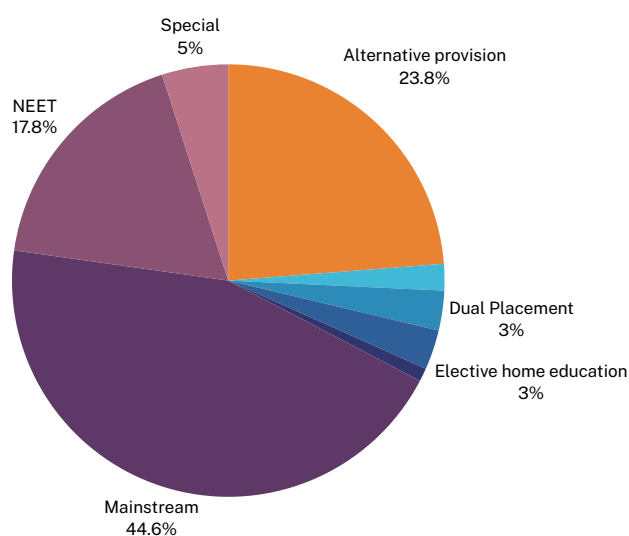

Figure 2.2 Education provision

In site 5, when asked in the follow up interview why they thought more young people were in mainstream education, they provided two reasons. The first was that six of the young people were in the same school. They felt that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) of this school was particularly 'nurturing' and worked in a 'trauma-informed' way that allowed them to see the 'bigger picture' of what might be happening for these young people. The second reason, they considered to be a result of the specific social work team that had oversight of the children and young people. They felt this team were particularly good at partnership working.

In this team it was felt the team manager had created a culture of challenging decisions and supporting and advocating for young people and their families and also putting in extra support for the young people.

> You've got a team manager, there, I would say, who's in terms of that culture he sets. They very much advocate for young people, as well. So they're pretty vociferous around kind of, you know, if they're not in school, they'll challenge that and they'll really get behind parents and children, to move it forward. (Social worker)

One interview participant, whose area didn't participate in the survey, noted the challenges of accurately understanding the picture of exclusion in their area. They noted that alternative provision was used in place of permanent exclusion:

> Our suspensions and our figures are significantly higher than the national average, although our permanent exclusion data is still showing below the national average, but that hides a bit of a hidden story around the use of alternative learning provision. (Education worker)

A greater proportion of girls were in alternative provision than boys but twice as many boys were Not in Education, Employment or Training.
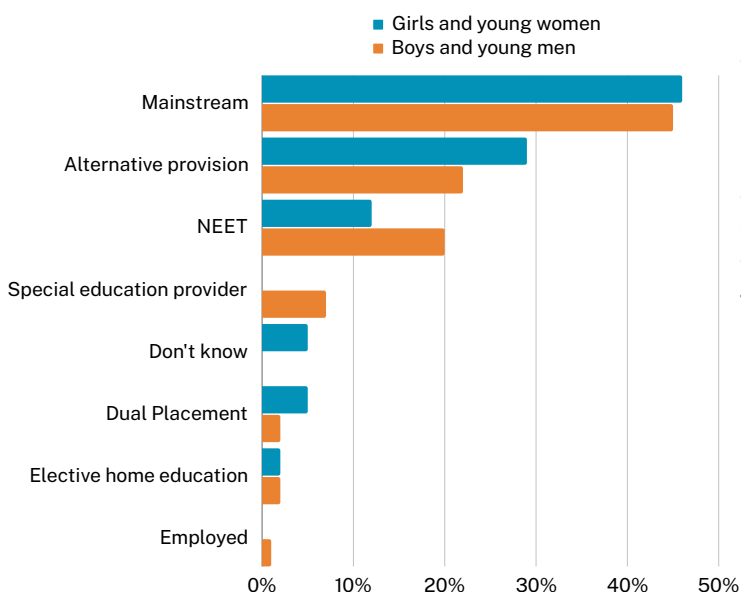

An equal proportion of girls and boys were in mainstream education. However, there were some variations across other provider types. 29% of girls were in alternative provision compared to 22% of boys. 20% of boys were Not in Education, Employment or Training compared to 12% of girls. All of the six children in Special Education provision were boys. Analysis found limited variation between education provider for non-racially minoritised and racially minoritised children.

Figure 2.3 Education provision by gender (Note: Figures are proportional to the sample size.)

The vast majority of children and young people had experienced some type of exclusion at school. A fifth had experienced permanent exclusion.

85% of the children and young people included in the survey had experienced some form of exclusion while at school. Of the children and young people that experienced some form of exclusion:
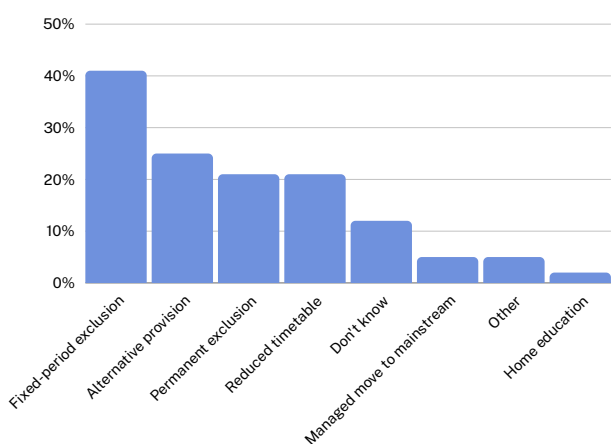
41% had experienced a fixed-period exclusion, 25% had experienced movement to an alternative provision, 21% had experienced a permanent exclusion, 21% had been placed on a reduced timetable, 5% had experienced a managed move to a mainstream setting, 2% were home educated, and for 12% it was not known. Because of the challenges participants from social care had in accessing data on education it is likely that these are underestimates of the true picture and types of exclusions used.

Figure 2.4 Types of exclusion (Note: Young people experienced multiple types of exclusions.)

More children and young people from a non-racially minoritised group experienced permanent exclusion but the education experiences of a quarter of racially minoritised children were not known.

Of the children that experienced some type of exclusion, 23% of non-racially minoritised children had experienced permanent exclusion compared to 18% of racially minoritised young people.

More non-racially minoritised young people experienced movement to an alternative provision (29% compared to 18%) and more than double (26%) of non-racially minoritised young people had been on a reduced timetable compared to 10% of racially minoritised young people. The education experiences of 23% of racially minoritised young people were not known compared to 8% of non-racially minoritised. Due to this missing data it is hard to draw conclusions about the education experiences of racially minoritised young people.
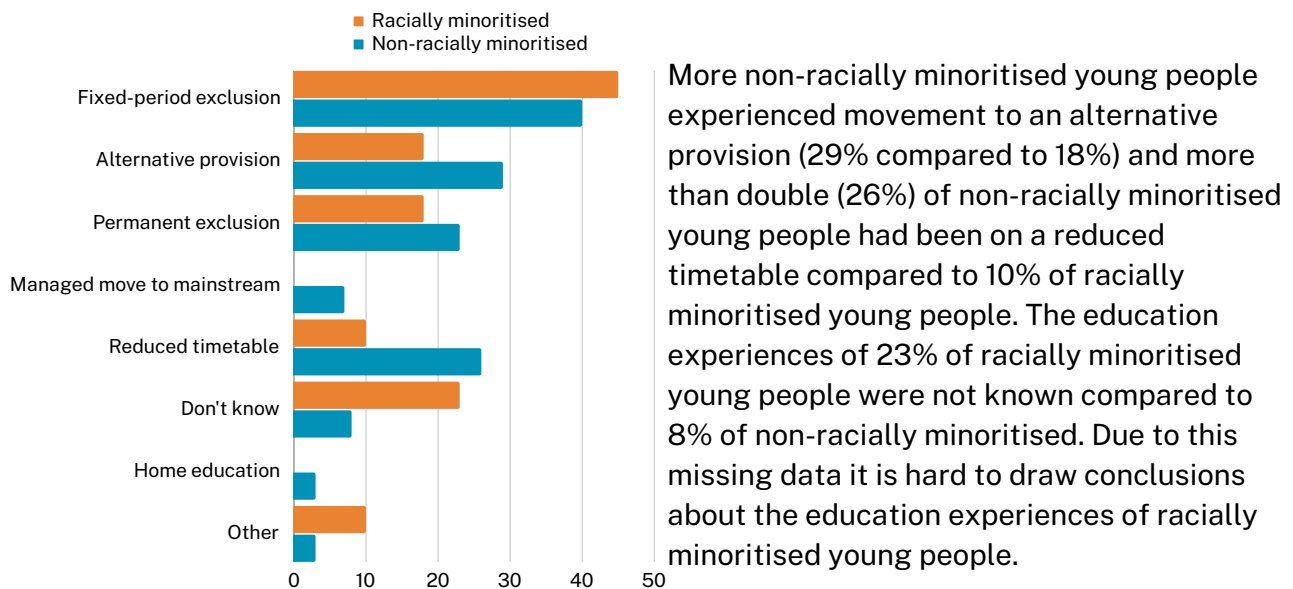
Figure 2.5 Exclusions by racial group (Note: Figures are proportional to the sample size for each group. Young people could experience multiple exclusion types.)

Twice as many boys than girls experienced permanent exclusion. More girls experienced fixed-period exclusions and reduced timetables than boys.

Of the children that had experienced any kind of exclusion, more than twice as many boys had experienced permanent exclusion than girls (26% compared to 12%). However, girls experienced slightly more fixed-period exclusions than boys (46% compared to 39% boys) and more girls were reported as having had reduced timetables than boys (27% compared to 19%).
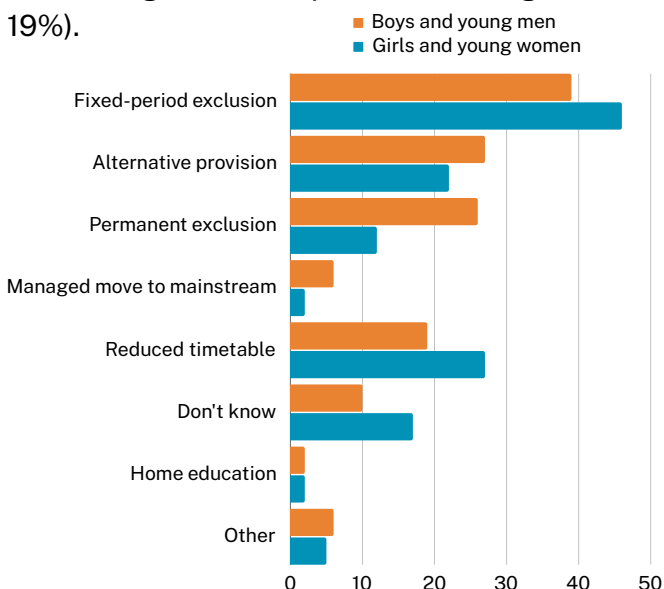

Figure 2.6 Types of exclusion (Note: Figures are proportional to the sample size for each group. Young people experienced multiple types of exclusions.)

A fifth of children and young people with a disability had experienced permanent exclusion.

20% of children that were identified as having a disability had experienced a permanent exclusion. This was slightly less than the group of children that did not have a disability of which 22% had experienced a permanent exclusion.

Disability, and specifically undiagnosed additional learning needs, were discussed by the majority of interview participants as a challenge for young people impacted by extra-familial harm. Several interview participants noted how the needs of children with neurodiversity may not be recognised in schools, or appropriately resourced for, and how this contributed to confusion about over how the behaviours of children were understood and addressed.

> A lot of these young people are neurodiverse, and sadly that's not been picked up in their education, and it's actually taken social workers and support workers to unpick what's going on for these young people, to actually start to understand that their communication style is clearly impacting on the schools presenting the information in a way. (Social work team)

Others noted that they felt children with disabilities, and neurodiversity specifically, were more at risk of exclusion and also extra-familial harm:

> What we're seeing now is there's so much ADHD, ASD, speech and language concerns, you know, but that's been there for a long time, and then all of a sudden you see this spike in missing and exploitation. (Social worker)

> One element that I've noticed is that young people with certain difficulties, like, neuro-diversities like ADHD, tend to be impulsive in their behaviours, which I think is something that groomers look for to exploit, so... and a lot of the reasons for exclusions, or some of the education decisions were based on disruptive behaviour, so I suppose there may be a bias or a train of thought of, maybe, that there would have been more young people with additional needs [being excluded]. (Social worker)

A fifth of children and young people in care had been permanently excluded and a quarter of children recorded as child in need or early help.

Analysis examined exclusion experiences based on social care status. This identified that: 21% of Children in Care, 24% of children recorded as Child in Need or Early Help and 11% on Child Protection plans had experienced permanent exclusion. One participant felt that exclusion was often the pre-cursor to an escalation in experiences at home that could contribute to a child being placed in care:

> For the majority, what we see is when a child is not in education, it places significant pressure on the home environment and then parents struggle to cope, and then the child naturally becomes 'edge of care'. And there is a direct... I would argue there's a direct link between our young people who experience exploitation, who aren't in school, and then subsequently become cared for. (Social work team)

Another participant felt it was harder for some parents to challenge decisions made by schools. Particularly those that had previously experienced social care involvement:

> I think sometimes, like, the parents' own experiences perhaps of, if they've got a long history of involvement with social care, for example, they might be more used to being done to, rather than kind of, being able to push back against that. (Social worker)

Children and young people that experienced permanent exclusion were mostly impacted by child criminal exploitation.

Of the 28 children that experienced a permanent exclusion the forms of extra-familial harm they were most impacted by were: 82% were impacted by CCE, 18% CSE, 14% trafficking, 11% missing, 7% serious youth violence & 4% gang affiliation. Young people could be impacted by multiple forms of harm.

What did we learn about the reasons given for why children and young people experienced exclusion and moves?

For each instance where a child or young person had experienced some form of exclusion or move, participants were asked to provide information on the reasons that were recorded for the exclusion or move. If the young person had experienced more than one exclusion, participants were asked to state what exclusion the reason related to. The reasons for exclusions were provided as free-text written accounts that were then re-coded and categorised into a set of 13 possible options [1]. The thirteen categories included:

1. Disruptive Behaviour
2. Evidence of physical violence to a student
3. Evidence of abuse to student
4. Threat of violence towards a student
5. Threat of violence/ abuse towards an adult
6. Evidence of physical abuse towards an adult
7. Attendance and punctuality
8. Breaking school rules
9. 'Anti-social behaviour'
10. Substance use
11. Issues outside of school
12. Victim
13. Not known

A distinction was drawn between 'evidence of physical violence' and the 'threat of violence' to identify a difference where the reasons suggested a violent incident had occurred (for example a fight) and those where the reason appeared to be a 'threat' of violence. For example, carrying a knife was coded as 'threat of violence' whereas the use of a knife would be 'evidence of violence' (although no such incidents were recorded). The following two examples were labelled as evidence of physical violence to student:

> "Fighting, challenging behaviour" (case notes, 16, male, CCE, racially minoritised)

> "Persistent disruptive behaviour, physical assault on another student" (case notes, female, 14, CSE, non-racially minoritised)

Whereas the following two examples were labelled as 'threat of violence towards a student' (among other categories):

> "Disruptive behaviour and accused of/ intel to say he was carrying a knife but never found with a knife in school" (case notes, male, 15, non-racially minoritised, CCE & Trafficking)

> "Excluded due to violent and aggressive behaviours use of alcohol and illegal substances on-site. Risk of violence to others. School tried to work to reduce risk of exploitation to him but felt this had become to unmanageable for him and posed a risk to other students". (case notes, male, 15, CCE, non-racially minoritised)

[1] How participants collected information on the reasons for exclusion varied between sites and cases. This means that in some instances the information was taken from the education recording system whereas in other cases it was collected from social care notes or conversations with practitioners.

Disruptive Behaviour
Not known
Attendance and punctuality
Threat of violence/ abuse to adult
Threat of violence towards student
Evidence of physical violence to student
Outside of school
Victim
Breaking school rules
Substance use
Evidence of physical abuse to adult
Evidence of abuse to student
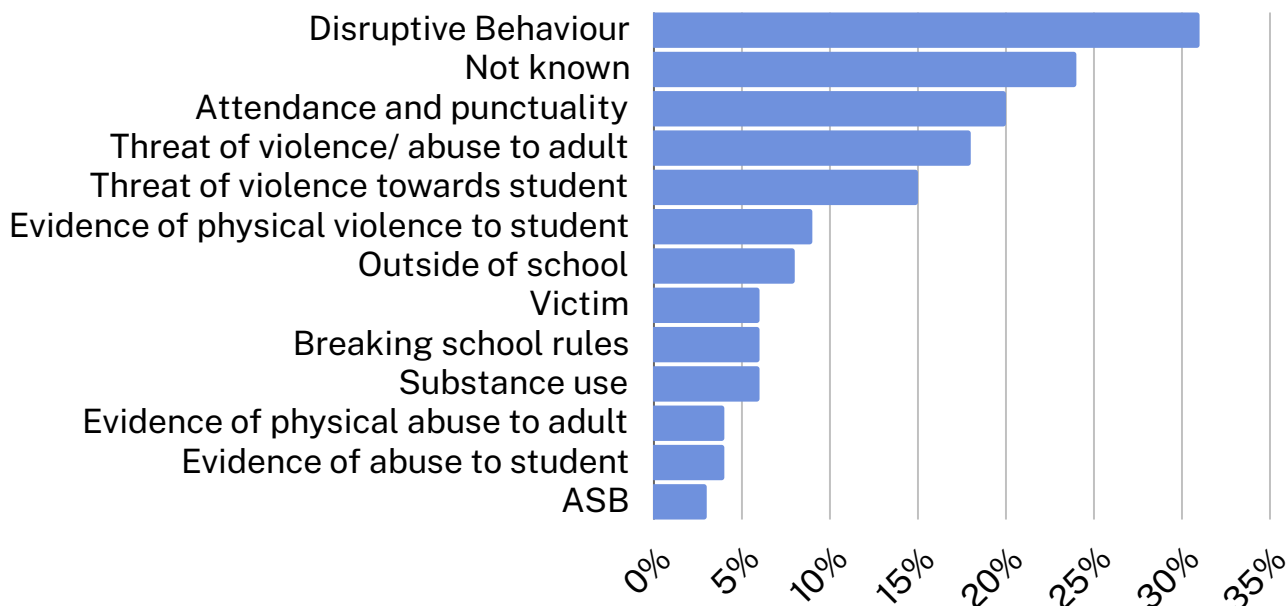ASB

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35%

Figure 3.1 Reasons for exclusion (Note: Young people could have multiple reasons for an exclusion.)

Of the children that had experienced any form of exclusion, 'disruptive behaviour' was the reason given in a third of cases and 'attendance and punctuality' was given in 20% of cases [2]. In the survey, these reasons became more pronounced in cases where children had experienced permanent exclusion. Of the children that had experienced permanent exclusion, in the majority of cases 'disruptive behaviour' was provided as a reason for exclusion. 'Attendance and punctuality' was the reason listed in a third of cases. Reasons for any form of exclusion were not known in a quarter of cases.

> "School attendance noted in [panel] referral and elsewhere, i.e. frequent absence from school and only attended a few times. Limited attendance. Incident at college that impacted going back". (case notes, 13, male, CCE, racially minoritised)

One interview participant challenged some of the reasoning that had been given as to why young people had been excluded. In this site, eight of the ten children discussed had experienced some form of movement or exclusion including four permanent exclusions. In four of these cases the reason of 'absence' was given. The suggestion given here by the participant appeared to be that either the reasons were recorded incorrectly on children's files or schools were illegally excluding.

> I have double checked, you can't exclude a child for non-school attendance. It has to be about the behaviour. (Education worker)

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[2] Categories for reasons for permanent exclusion were generic in some places e.g. disruptive behaviour whereas some participants provided a narrative.
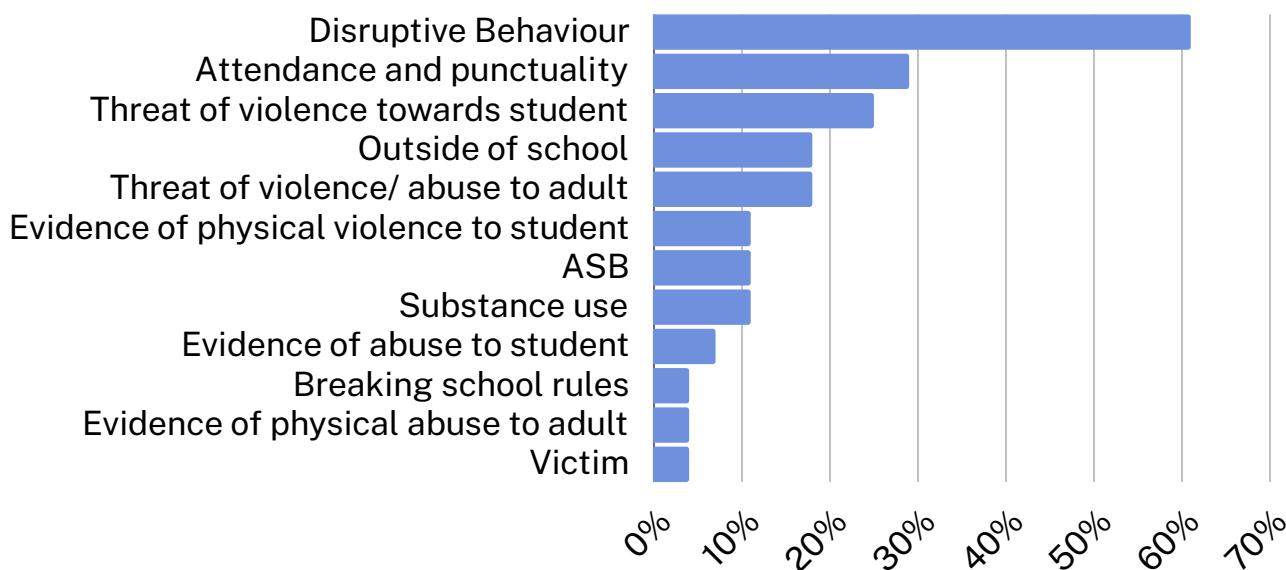
Figure 3.2 Reasons for permanent exclusion (Note: Young people could have multiple reasons for an exclusion.)

Non-racially minoritised children and young people were excluded more for making 'threats' of violence towards a student whereas as racially minoritised children and young people were noted more for being excluded due to 'evidence' of violence

The reasons for exclusion were analysed for non-racially and racially minoritised children and young people that had experienced any form of exclusion. 19% of non-racially minoritised children and young people that had experienced an exclusion were noted as being for 'threats of violence towards a student' compared to 6% of racially minoritised children and young people. For 18% of racially minoritised children and young people that received an exclusion, 'evidence of physical violence to a student' was noted compared to 5% of non-racially minoritised children and young people.[3]

The reason of 'threats of violence towards a student' was given in four times more cases of non-racially minoritised young people than racially minoritised (19% to 6%) and twice as many times for 'threats of violence towards an adult' (21% to 12%). Although the actual number of cases where 'evidence of physical violence to a student' were low (n=10) this reason was given to 18% of racially minoritised young people compared to 5% of non-racially minoritised young people. However, it is worth noting that analysis is significantly impacted by the fact that the education experiences of 23% of racially minoritised young people was 'not known'. In interpreting these findings it is worth considering how violence and threats may be perceived by and for certain groups.

[3] It is important to note that the term 'evidence' is being used to distinguish between a threat of violence and some suggestion of actual violence. However, it is not possible to identify if actual violence did take place. Evidence is used loosely here.
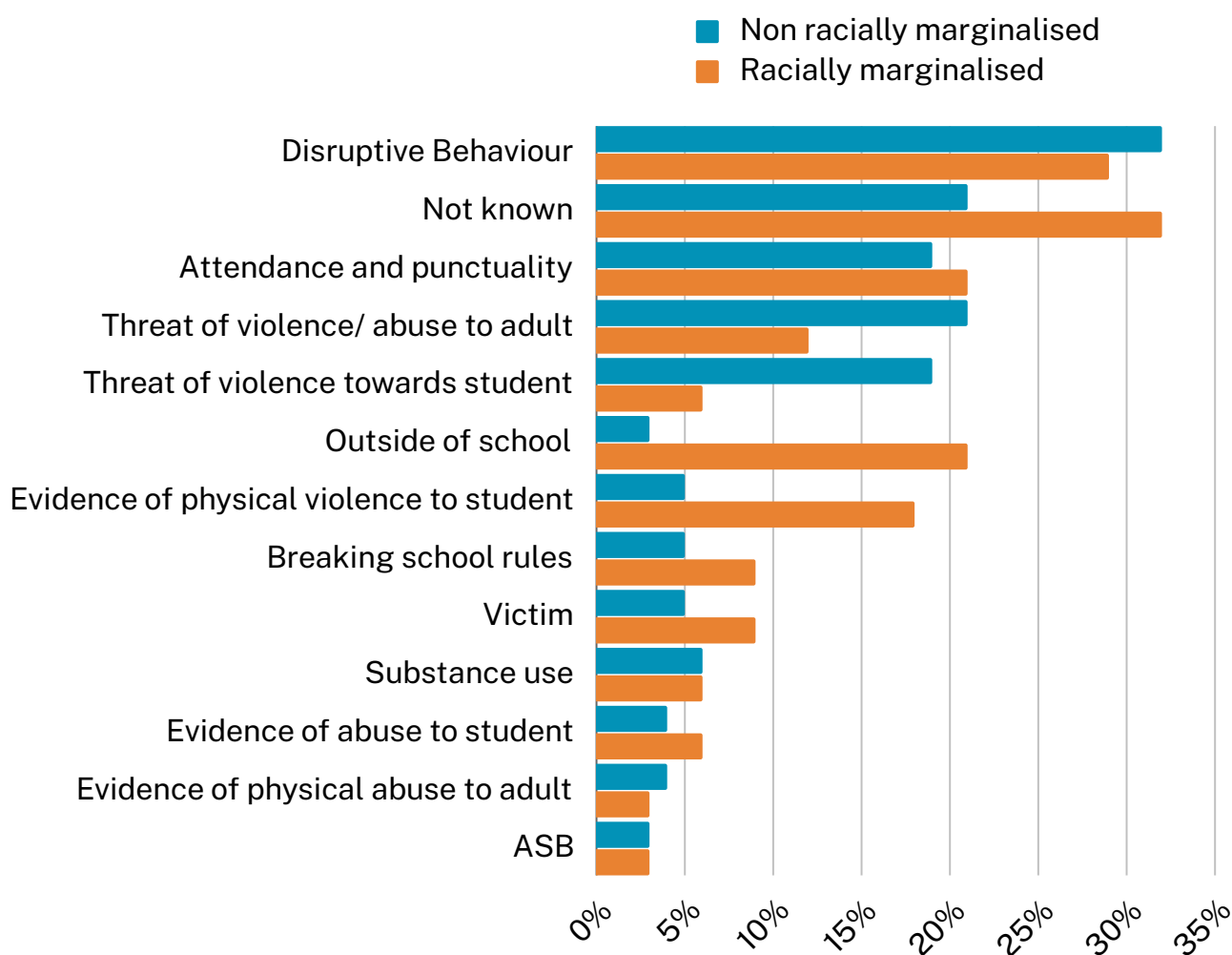
Figure 3.3 Reasons for exclusion by racial group (Note: multiple reasons were possible)

Children and young people were excluded for reasons that were strongly associated to their experiences of extra-familial harm.

Although it is likely that all of the children in the sample had experienced victimisation, in seven instances being a 'victim of harm' was overtly noted as part of a reason for exclusion. For example:

> "brought a knife into school because of a rumour he was going to be stabbed with a protractor in school" (case notes, fixed-period exclusion)

> "Excluded from mainstream education in 2021 for asking for a sexual image of a female peer and sharing the image. He was only 12 at the time and has ASD. Placed in an alternative provider in the borough [...] That alternative provider is in a known gang area. [...] Concerns raised about the impact of this on his safety from gangs in his own area and in turn from the alternative provider". (Permanent exclusion, fixed-period exclusion and managed moves)

> "wanted to transition gender and experienced homophobic bullying. Moved to a girls school" (case notes, managed move to mainstream)

In the interviews, participants were keen to highlight how often behaviours that are part of the experience of extra-familial harm and exploitation can be the behaviours that young people were sanctioned for:

Some of the reasons they're being expelled for are reasons that they need support for. (Social worker)

I think disproportionately, it's still young Black boys who are excluded and who are in contact with the police and who get very, you know, punitive responses. A young person carrying a knife, a young person carrying drugs, are signs of exploitation, whereas they're still being looked at as, you know, young people making choices to harm others. The whole issue around, you know, kids carrying knives into schools, and then, 'that's it, you're excluded, and we'll send you to'… that still goes on. You know, and we know that often young kids are carrying knives for protection and very rarely… I can't think of a single incident where a child has actually harmed another child on school grounds. This all happens in the community, so I do not understand the argument of, 'you can't come into school because you're a risk to other students'. Where is your protection of that child who is saying, 'I do not feel safe'? (Social work team)

Although only noted in 9 cases, 21% of racially minoritised children and young people (n=7) had issues related to 'outside school' noted as a reason for exclusion compared to 3% of racially minoritised children (n=2).

"in 2016 the managed move was due to his behaviour at school he became verbally abusive to staff and students, throwing stuff about, he threatened to stab his teacher, so there was a managed move to specialist provision. They were looking at the [pupil referral unit] but with the EHCP they decided to send him to special school. He was excluded from college after panel in 2022 due to behaviour, non-attendance and had been arrested 3 times and having a bladed article. College said they can't manage risk and he's not attending anyway so they are excluding". (case notes, permanent exclusion and managed move)

"Not attending the site due to risks, following an incident of serious youth violence one month before. In 2019 school had issued a fixed term exclusion for having a phone and school had requested an alternative provision. It was noted if exclusion is only for 5 days he would not need to attend an alternative provision. Concerns were raised retrospectively that the alternate provision was in a gang affiliated area who were responsible for [the murder of a family member]". (case notes, fixed-period exclusion)

In half of the cases of children and young people that experienced some form of exclusion, professionals did not know if the reason was 'in the name of safeguarding'.

Of the 103 young people that experienced some form of exclusion, when asked if exclusions were taken 'in the name of safeguarding' participants stated yes for 19% of cases, no for 32% of cases and in 49% of cases they were 'not sure'. The question itself prompted varied responses from participants with some 'guessing' if they thought the reason was for safeguarding. Some participants appeared to answer based on their assumption of the schools reasoning. Others appeared to answer based on their judgment as to if they felt the reasons were for safeguarding or not.

Interview participants noted how challenging it is for schools to manage the risks associated with criminal exploitation and youth violence.

The majority of participants noted the challenges that schools are facing in addressing the risks associated to CCE and youth violence in schools. Notably discussions centred on these forms of harm – by way of discussions of violence, weapons and drug use and sale – and not sexual forms of harm. Interview participants noted restricted funding, pressures of attainment and lack of trained support staff to address the additional needs the issues may create:

> [schools] feel they have a lack of capacity to manage these children because of cuts in funding, not enough people, too many kids, all that kind of stuff, (Education worker)

> Most of our secondary schools are above their published admission numbers in most year groups, which means we don't have the flexibility of movement, and this puts additional pressures on schools in terms of just physically numbers that they have to contend with. (Education worker)

Interviewees also shared that schools were often not prioritised in multi-agency safety planning in relation to extra-familial harm, but they were required to provide the support to manage the safety of young people at school. This was a particular challenge when responding to police conditions:

> [we] have a growing number of children who are involved in very serious incidents that the police are involved in, and the police will come back and say, 'bail conditions mean this child can't stay. They have to go somewhere else', and that's not done in consultation with anybody, and school just suddenly find themselves… they have to, we have to try and place a child somewhere else on the back of an investigation that more often than not will end in 'no further action', and it's really difficult to be putting children in risky situations based on somebody somewhere has said- the police have said 'they've got to move'. (Education worker)

> you feel like [schools] are in this alone. I've certainly been aware of where children have gone through, you know, the local authority's sort of social care system, and schools aren't even consulted with. They're not even aware. They're not even invited to attend things like meetings or strategy discussions, yet, nine times out of ten, decisions are made by multi-agency partners, by police, health and local authority social workers. They're safe enough because they're in school, or it's school that's gonna actually have to safety plan to try and keep this child safe, and those decisions around threshold of 'no further action', and it's kind of well, over to school, i.e. be the lead professional, lead agency for this child, yet school hasn't even been part or privy to that process of decision-making. (Education worker)

What did we learn about what people are doing to make schools safer for young people?

I asked interview participants to reflect on some of the things they felt were working well in their areas that could be shared with others. They noted a number of things. It is important to note that these are what professionals identified as successful, not what young people themselves necessarily noted as successful.

It was important for social work teams to look at patterns that were happening locally.

Several interview participants noted the importance of looking at trends and patterns that were happening in their schools to understand which schools may need additional support. One participant noted how this resulted in them having a social worker placed in one school:

> All of the children were all attending our alternative provision. So much so that we did some work where the social workers were working into the school, because that's where all the kids went, and we wanted to build those relationships. (Social work team)

Another group of participants noted how important it was to think about the different contexts young people were spending time within. Using a context weighting tool had helped them, and other professionals,[4] to understand that school was a positive context for a young person that needed to be supported:

> We had a young man, one young man who was going missing from school every day, but that hit the missing indicator, which then hit the [panel] and it came to our team as a frequent missing. But actually, when we really unpicked it, utilised the group supervision and the context weighting tool, his greatest context was school. (Social work team)

While the survey noted biases in the way that particular young people's behaviours were labelled and responded to, this was directly noted by one participant as something they tried to challenge. They noted specifically the importance of challenging racial bias:

> [we] need to get better at it, a lot more explicit, and mindful of our language, how we talk about some of this stuff, cos I think it's really uncomfortable, you know? I meet with schools often, and the minute you start talking about some of this stuff, depending who you've got, they get very uncomfortable. So, it's just about trying to get used to this language, now, being more explicit, and thinking about, you know, how some of those [racial biases] influence and inform those decisions, i.e. around suspensions and exclusions, because they do. We don't call them out for that. (Education worker)

Multi-agency partners working positively to support schools.

Several interview participants noted how challenges of engaging or working with different schools resulted in varied approaches to exclusion and a lack of shared decision making. However, a number of interview participants noted how they had taken steps to create processes, improve relationships and meaningfully share resources with the goal of supporting schools.

[4] Available on the Contextual Safeguarding website

It boils down to generally trying to co-ordinate with schools to ensure there is sufficient plans around young people who are identified at risk of exploitation and serious violence, as well as trying to cultivate processes and pathways to try and reduce, I guess, the length of exclusion or avoid permanent exclusion, for incidents such as knife possession, and drug possession. We're working on one [guidance for schools] to do with a serious 'one-off' violent incident. (Education worker)

Another participant noted the importance of linking up and sharing information from meetings in a way that was practical and helpful to schools:

we had education representation at our [panel], and the link in there has been really helpful because they take feedback back to our schools. So, we have a [panel] meeting on a Tuesday and then there's a Designated Safeguarding Leads briefing that happens every Wednesday, [and they feed in] just like a - these are the headlines. So, if there's any key themes coming out of the [panel] meeting, they will feed that back into schools, so that schools can be aware of it. And then we'll signpost to, like, 'this is who you need to go and talk to if you need more information, or if you have concerns about children in your school etc., etc.' So, that's created quite a nice feedback loop. (Social worker)

One survey participant was the only site in the survey that was able to answer the questions based on information collected at the panel. I asked them why they had more information on children's education experiences:

[we] focus on it quite explicitly. So I think panels were meant to be a move away from case management and to really focus on disruption, but what we've done for all our children is ensure there's a real robust plan around them to reduce the risks of exploitation. And, the primary part of that for children that are in education is education, so [schools] are invited to panels. If they are at alternate provisions, they're also invited to the panel. We have representation on our panel from our Learning Pathways department, our Safeguarding School lead… I've got a virtual school practitioner now who is co-located with us, that really focuses on children (Social worker)

Being able to leverage expertise that social work colleagues had with extra-familial harm to support schools was strengthened through the sharing of resources and facilitating shared learning. One site noted how they had set up a 'surgery' for schools to discuss children who might be excluded with the aim of reducing exclusions:

We set up a multi-agency surgery, with an opportunity for schools to come and discuss children who were potentially becoming at risk of permanent exclusion, whose behaviours were racking up. We have a huge number of children that we discuss through those surgeries, that are linked to incidents of extra-familial harm in terms of serious violence. (Education colleague)

Another site emphasised the strength that having a speech and language therapist had made for understanding young people's behaviours and communication and the value of sharing resources associated to this:

Our speech and language therapist [says], 'This is how you need to explain this to the young person.' And then going to teachers and saying, 'This is a speech and language report, you don't have the resource internally. We've, we've given you that. For now, use that to build your structure for that school.' And we've had schools take that with open arms and utilise and make changes. (Social work team)

Building and strengthening relationships with schools and education colleagues was noted by several other interview participants:

> It would be fair to say that our relationship with those teachers, with those safeguarding leads and with those panel members is because we've got a relationship and they've took time, we've took time to understand each other and really respectfully approach it in a way that we support each other rather than this being a challenge. (Social work team)

> young people we've managed to keep in mainstream were young people that we were managing two years ago, so capturing the young people from an earlier age I think ended up in a better outcome, because we were able to work closer with schools. (Social worker)

Asking young people what they want.

A solution that was not discussed by many participants was the idea of asking young people themselves what they wanted and what could improve their school experiences. However, engaging directly with students was discussed by one area:

> [we run] a carousel event where we take multi agencies into the school to run like wellbeing days. There was a report, 'We don't tell our teachers' and it was linked to sexual harassment in the school environment. Reading that report it was quite striking that, you know, how much occurs within schools in [area]. And what the young people were saying was that when they receive support to address some of these issues it tends to be by their teachers. So, you know, you've got your maths teacher talking to you about sexual health. And it was uncomfortable. So, we've tried to respond to that by developing these carousel days so that they have an experience of all the professionals that are working in [area] so that young people know where they can go to outside of that school environment if they need to speak to someone, etc. And the response we've had from schools is that pupils find it, pupils have really, really enjoyed it and really engaged well with the day". (Social worker)

Recommendations

This is the first research project of its kind looking at the education experiences of children and young people impacted by extra-familial harm from a social care perspective. The findings highlight several issues which I report with recommendations:

> 1. School exclusion needs to be understood as a safeguarding issue.

> 2. Social care colleagues need to prioritise understanding, recording and engaging with young people's schooling experiences.

The education experiences of children and young people impacted by extra-familial harm are important. The findings show that the majority of young people in this sample had experienced some form of exclusion but there was a disconnect between these experiences and social care's prioritisation of recording and knowing about them. As we know, school exclusion can have adverse impacts on any child. But for those already experiencing extra-familial harm, it is essential that children's welfare needs are prioritised when decisions are made about exclusion or moves. Despite the clear importance that social work participants placed on education for these young people there were clear disconnects between what was happening, or had happened, for young people at school and how involved and informed social care were of this. The significant challenges that participants surfaced in trying to find information about young people's schooling highlights that education is not always prioritised in safeguarding discussions for young people experiencing extra-familial harm and/or that social work colleagues are not always engaged during the exclusion process.

> 3. Schools need to be supported to understand the experiences, and risks, young people experiencing extra-familial harm may be under. However, increased information-sharing is unlikely to drive this change.

> 4. Safeguarding colleagues need to undertake steps to challenge biases that may be present in social work and education responses including attending to gaps in recording where they exist.

All participants noted that they felt schools did not fully understand the unique risks of extra-familial harm and how behaviours of young people that resulted in exclusion were often indicators of harm. They also felt that schools operated in a 'risk-averse' manner. Considering the extreme pressures placed upon schools it is important that multi-agency partners can work together to support schools to improve their understanding of the issues. However, the bias evident in the survey findings combined with the context of risk aversion within schools suggest that improved information sharing may not be the solution and could in fact adversely impact young people. It is important to note the concerns raised by participants of the risks that increased knowledge by schools of the extra-familial harm a young person may be facing could (and has) resulted in exclusions. Before automatically creating processes to increase school participation in panels it will be essential that steps are taken to challenge bias, improve understanding and develop risk-sensible cultures. A first step may be revieing panel data using the methodology in this project to highlight biases.

5. Create resources to support Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools to hold and address extra-familial harm and options to emotionally contain the anxiety associated with this form of harm.

All participants noted the anxiety and stress that can come from trying to address extra-familial harm and many noted that this resulted in risk-averse practice. Schools, and Designated Safeguarding Leads in particular, need greater training and support – practical and emotional – to be facilitated to hold risk and the emotional impact this can have. Social care departments alongside education colleagues should consider ways to support schools to increase learning, and schools should consider options to prioritise supervision for DSLs.

6. Panels need to routinely reflect on the 'trends' and 'patterns' of the young people discussed ensuring they are meeting the needs of girls and women as well as boys and men. For example, not missing boys and young men's experiences of CSE.

7. Ensure that professionals working with young people impacted by extra-familial harm and CCE in particular, have safe and containing work environments.

It was notable from the survey that the majority of panels were focussing on issues of CCE rather than CSE. This is interesting considering the genesis of many of these panels will have been in response to CSE. This raises the question of if there is now less CSE, or if the panels reflect current trends in what the issue of the day is. If the latter is true then it is important that those overseeing these processes are reflecting on what might be driving this change and ensuring that, as may be in this case, that women and girls are not missed from the process or labelling boys as experiencing CCE when they aren't. The focus on CCE was not only shown in the survey data but also echoed in the types of discussions and issues raised by participants in the interview process. In particular the specific high-risk nature and threat to life that was perceived by participants as associated to CCE may be driving this change where panels are used as mechanism to contain professional anxiety.

8. Social work and safeguarding colleagues need to focus specifically on the issue of racial bias and who they consider at risk from extra-familial harm.

The disproportionate focus on racially minoritised young people with social work oversight was striking. Considering the significant implications that social care involvement can have for young people it is important that safeguarding professionals reflect on what may be driving this. This is particularly important in areas where the number of young people from a minoritised group was significantly disproportional to the local population. Additionally, the use of 'gangs' for racially minoritised young people and 'anti-social behaviour' for non-racially minoritised young people was striking. Social work colleagues should routinely review the categories used to define harm and think explicitly about the role that racism, sexism and classism may play in how young people are viewed, labelled and responded to.

9. Learn from schools and areas where children are in mainstream education.

Despite interview participants overwhelmingly suggesting that young people impacted by extra-familial harm are in alternative provision, this was not the case in all sites. These findings show that it is possible for young people to be supported in mainstream education. More needs to be done to understand what facilitates this difference.

10. Schools need to be accountable for exclusions and able to evidence harmful behaviours but in ways that don't harm schools and educators.

11. Appropriate resources need to be made accessible for schools to help keep children in schools.

The findings evidenced the use of illegal exclusions within schools with attendance and punctuality listed as the second most common reason a child was excluded. Furthermore, while 'disruptive behaviours' was the most listed reason for why a child experienced an exclusion there remained a big gap between this and evidence of actual harm or even threats of harm made within schools. There are clearly links between the communication and behaviours or children impacted by extra-familial harm, biases in how behaviours are perceived in education and social care and how this maps against exclusion. The continued discussion of challenges of resources to manage behaviours within schools suggests that it is likely that the exclusion system is being used to fill the gap of appropriate safeguarding measures.

12. More research is needed to understand the experiences of minoritised young people.

The survey highlighted that racially minoritised young people has experienced slightly less exclusion than non-racially minoritised young people in the survey which varies from national statistics on exclusion. However, less was known about the reasons for exclusion for racially minoritised young people. Furthermore, the distinction between 'evidence' of violence and 'threats' of violence was distinct for racially minoritised and non-minoritised young people. Further research is needed to understand what it was about these young people that may have led to social care involvement, perceptions of harm and to why less was known about their education experiences.

13. We need to learn more about young people's experiences of education and the range of exclusions used.

14. Improve recording of the types of exclusions used.

This project did not set out to specifically focus on young people's own perspectives on their education experiences. However, it is striking that routes for engaging with young people on these issues was rarely mentioned by interview participants. Few participants discussed involving young people in decision-making and opportunities to do so in social care pathways. A further absence was the use of 'internal exclusions'. Although listed as an option in the survey this was not noted by any survey participants. It is possible that the discourse around reducing exclusions may result in 'hidden' exclusions. Safeguarding colleagues should promote improving recording of the range of exclusions that may be used.

15. Contextual Safeguarding approaches should better communicate the role of schools in addressing harm outside of schools.

Issues happening outside of schools (such as arrests) were noted as reasons for exclusion, although there were only a few instances. It is possible that an unintended consequence of Contextual Safeguarding and the need for schools to safeguard young people beyond the school boundaries, is that schools may be using punitive approaches to manage harm outside the school (such as exclusion).

16. Mainstream schools need support to prevent extra-familial harm.

The findings show that extra-familial harm is not an 'alternative schools problem'. In the survey, the highest proportion of children and young people impacted by extra-familial harm were in mainstream education. This could signal that extra-familial harm starts in mainstream settings and may be exasperated by moves to different providers. It is important that mainstream schools are supported to prevent these forms of harm.

Appendix A

Survey questions

Part one: your local area

Please note that sites will remain anonymous, this information is to help us with follow-up and comparing data with national data.

1. What is the name of your local authority?
2. What is your name?
3. What is your job title?

Part two: meetings to discuss extra-familial harm

4. What social-care led meetings or panels are held to provide oversight in your area for children experiencing extra-familial harm?

Part three: Meeting

5. What is the name of the meeting we will discuss today?
6. Are the panels held regionally? (if yes, how many?)
7. What types of harm does this meeting/s focus on?
• (Child sexual exploitation, Child criminal exploitation, Trafficking, Modern Slavery, Serious youth violence, Harmful sexual behaviour, Radicalisation, Anti-social behaviour, Missing, Gang affiliation, Other)
8. What was the date of this meeting?
9. What organisation(s) chaired the meeting?
10. How frequent is the meeting?
11. How many children were discussed at this meeting (including new referrals and repeat referrals)?

For the following questions you may need to access the individual case files of each child listed. Please complete the following information for each young person listed on the meeting minutes.

Demographics

12. How old were they at the time of the meeting?
13. What is their recorded gender?
14. What is their recorded ethnicity?
15. Do they have a recorded disability?
• (Physical, learning, speech and language, mental health, neurodiversity, no, not sure)
16. Do they have a diagnosed disability?
• (Physical, learning, speech and language, mental health, neurodiversity, no, not sure)
17. Do they have an EHCP plan?
• (Yes, no, not sure)

18. What type of extra-familial harm is this child affected by?
• (Child sexual exploitation, Child criminal exploitation, Trafficking, Modern Slavery, Serious youth violence, Harmful sexual behaviour, Radicalisation, Anti-social behaviour, Missing, Gang affiliation, Other)
19. What is their social care status?

Education
For the following questions you may need to ask the individual worker for the child
20. What type of education setting/provision did they attend at the time of the meeting?
• (Mainstream school, Mainstream school but a reduced timetable, College, 6th form college, Special school, On-site alternative provision, Off-site maintained alternative provision: Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Alternative provision academy, Independent school, Unregistered school, Non-maintained alternative provision, Independent school, Unregistered schools, Illegal school, Elective home education, Not in Education, Dual placement, Training or Employment (NEET), Don't know, other)
21. If unknown at the time of the meeting, what type of education setting/provision do they attend now?
22. Has this young person had any prior experiences of the following:
• (Permanent exclusion, fixed-period exclusion, managed move to mainstream school, managed move to alternative provision, managed move (other); off-site alternative provision, on-site alternative provision, illegal exclusion, off-rolling, on a reduced timetable, other (please specify))

Safeguarding
Some young people experience multiple decisions over their school life. For example they might experience a number of managed moves before being excluded. For the following questions you can choose a recent decision/s they experienced to answer the questions or think about the decisions generally:

You can answer the following questions for both before and after the meeting date.
23. If you are focussing on a specific decisions/event which decision/s are you focussing on?
• (Permanent exclusion, fixed-period exclusion, managed move to mainstream school, managed move to alternative provision, off-site alternative provision, on-site alternative provision, illegal exclusion, off-rolling, on a reduced timetable, disrupted schooling; other (please specify))
24. To your knowledge, what were the reason for these education decisions? (please write a sentence or two)
25. To your knowledge, were any of the above educations decisions taken for safeguarding reasons?
i. Yes (what were the reasons) _____
ii. No
iii. Unsure

26. Were these decisions taken:

i. To protect the young person from other students,

ii. To protect other students from them

iii. Both

iv. Unsure

v. Neither

27. To your knowledge, did the decisions made by schools (for example exclusion) impact the outcome of their assessment and care planning for the young person? (please explain)

i. Yes (what were the reasons) _____

ii. No

iii. Unsure

28. To your knowledge did their experience of extra-familial harm start before or after these education decisions were made?

o Before

o After

o At the same time

o Not sure

Appendix B

To calculate the racial and ethnic profile of the local population relative to each participating authority I undertook a number of stages of analysis. Data on the racial and ethnic makeup of each local area was based on the 2021 census. This data was re-grouped into 'racially minoritised' and 'non-racially minoritised' to calculate the expected percentage for each geographical region. In five areas the geographical boundaries of the census data did not map against the geographical boundaries used by participating children's social care departments. In these cases, an average of the census data was calculated. For example, one participating site was made up of four census data geographical boundaries so the percentage of racially and non-racially minoritised people were based on an average of these four areas. The percentages of racially minoritised and non-racially minoritised young people were then calculated for each participating site in the survey. To calculate an average of the total sample I weighted the averages based on the population size of each authority (based on census data).

There are several limitations of this analysis. Firstly, the census data was not broken down by age. As such the proportions of racially minoritised and non-racially minoritised people in each area could differ by age. It was also not possible to gather data on the racial demographics of each social care departments so it was not possible to determine if these figures are out of proportion to general cases with social care oversight.

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