

# Deciding on how to introduce a child protection pathway for extra-familial harm: A summary of the decision-making process taken by three children's services departments in 2021



Many children's social care departments have found that traditional child protection pathways are an ill-fit for responding to situations of significant extra-familial harm. This is largely because they are structured around assessment of, and intervention with, parents/carers to meet young people's needs, whereas extra-familial harm requires assessment of and intervention with contexts beyond parental influence. In 2021 we worked with three areas to pilot alternative child protection pathways (ACPs) to coordinate support for young people at risk of, or experiencing, significant extra-familial harm. Each site took a different approach to designing and delivering their ACP pathway. This infographic outlines each of the three approaches, their legal underpinnings, and some of their key features.

## Adapt existing Child Protection pathway (Section 47)

Pathway usually reserved for harm that was attributable to (in)actions of parents/carers was adapted for use in situations of significant extra-familial harm

#### Amend Child in Need process (Section 17)

Adapt voluntary Child in Need process to include some elements of child protection pathway for cases of significant harm

## Create new Risk Outside The Home (ROTH) pathway (Section 47)

Create new pathway with same legal basis as traditional child protection pathway for coordinating support for young people at risk of, or experiencing, significant extra familial harm

Introduced "context weighting" to agree on which context had the biggest influence

Made efforts during child protection conferences to note when harm was not related to parenting and instead attributable to extra-familial factors.

Kept cases at Child in Need to facilitate voluntary engagement with parents

Amended Child in Need processes by attaching a child protection-style 'conference' when developing plans for significant extra-familial harm.

New reporting templates for professionals requiring information on contexts

New agenda: young person's views shared first, then parents, then professionals. Parents/carers and young person asked to reach a conclusion as to whether harm was significant

New category for harm: ROTH

## Retained features of traditional child protection pathway including:

- child abuse categories
- meeting structure
- assessments

**KEY** 

**FEATURES** 

- structure of reports approach to engaging parents in planning
- approach to engaging parents

As work progressed, operational and strategic leads for the pilot became anxious about overseeing support for children at risk of significant harm outside of child protection process. As a result, the site switched to child protection processes mid-pilot, and amended them by using alternative planning templates they originally developed for use in Child in Need processes.

Maintained some key features of child protection pathway including:

- a statutory, rather than voluntary, legal footing
- an independent chair to convene planning conferences
- fixed timescales to review plans
- establishment of a core group to coordinate delivery of agreed support plan

fluence

KEY FEATURES