

Responding to the shared features of extra-familial harm: an interactive activity guide

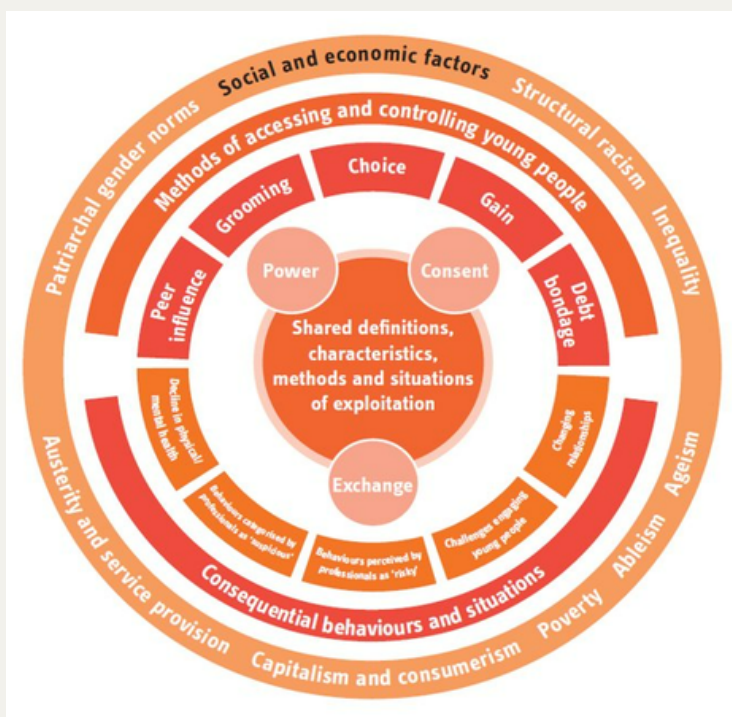
March 2025

The Contextual Safeguarding Network

The shared features of extra-familial harm

The Contextual Safeguarding briefing 'Understanding and responding to extra-familial harm: a holistic approach' outlined the shared features of 'extra-familial' harm, the shared methods of accessing and controlling young people, the consequent behaviours of these harms and situations in which they take place, and the ways in which they pose similar challenges to child welfare systems. It will be useful to read that short briefing before doing this activity. The diagram below is a reminder of how these shared features of extra-familial harm can be characterised.

Thinking of extra-familial harm in this way can assist strategic and operational practices. Operationally, framing extra-familial harm in this way can help professionals identify features of the harm, or its impact, that warrants attention, or that they are finding difficult to address. Strategically, service and system leaders can reflect on which features of extra-familial harm they are well placed to address, and where their services may struggle. This could inform decisions they make on service commissioning, partnership development and staff training, among other matters.



About this activity

This activity has been designed to support you to develop child-welfare responses to the shared features of extra-familial harm. There are no easy solutions and the activity can also be used to help you to identify where current responses do not address some or all of the features of extra-familial harm and where there are knowledge, skill, service or resource gaps. No one practitioner, one organisation or one piece of policy can solve violence and abuse impacting adolescents, but we can try to steer our services in the direction of young people's needs - this is also important to ensure child-welfare responses challenge the blaming and criminalisation of young people.

In this activity you will be presented with some of the common shared features of extra-familial harm and asked to reflect on how this presents among the young people your service supports, the ways in which these features of extra-familial harm challenge your service response, and to reflect on the ways in which your service is currently responding. At the end of the activity you will be asked to identify any mismatch between young people's needs in relation to extra-familial harm and the types of responses available to your service.

Responding to the shared features of extra-familial harm

	What does this look like with the young people you work with?	Why is this challenging to the system?		How do you currently respond to this?
Methods of accessing and controlling young people				
Peer influence	<i>Example: young person/people in conflict with another group of young people</i>	<i>Example: individual case work model doesn't easily facilitate group work</i>		<i>Example: young people are asked about peer relationships and these are recorded</i>
Grooming				
Gain				
Choice				
Debt				

Responding to the shared features of extra-familial harm

	What does this look like with the young people you work with?	Why is this challenging to the system?	How do you currently respond to this?
Consequential behaviours and situations			
Decline in physical/ mental health			
Behaviours characterised by professionals as 'suspicious'			
Behaviours perceived by professionals as 'risky'			
Challenges engaging young people			
Changing relationships			

Responding to the shared features of extra-familial harm

	What does this look like with the young people you work with?	Why is this challenging to the system?	How do you currently respond to this?
Socio-economic factors			
Patriarchal gender norms			
Structural racism			
Poverty and inequality			
Austerity and service provision			
Capitalism and consumerism			
Ableism			
Ageism/ adultification			

Mismatch between need and response?

Reflective activity

Having completed the tables above, have you identified any mismatch between the need identified and the service/system response? Use the reflective table below to jot these down and think about what this means for your service/system.

Identified need	Service/system gap	Possible action
Example: peer influence	Example: peer relationships are recorded but there's no peer group work to support safe relationships in peer groups	Example: is there scope within the service for working with peer groups to support safety?