



# Families as Safeguarding Partners: Embedding a Culture Change

Presented by  
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*“We knew him best; work with us”*

*"The family have shared their thoughts of feeling incredibly powerless in a system which is not designed to respond to keeping children safe when they are being criminally exploited"*

This Review notes the limitations of child protection planning as an effective mechanism for reducing extra familiar risk and harms to children and meaningfully engaging with their families

Oxfordshire Child Safeguarding Practice Review concerning Jacob  
(2021)



*Parents did not feel fully engaged, listened to, or heard, and said their overriding feeling was that they had to constantly fight to be heard, which they found ‘very stressful’. Many parents and family members said they felt they were regarded as ‘a bad parent’, who contributed to their children’s behaviour. They did not believe they were treated as part of the solution, nor enabled or supported to effectively manage their child’s behaviour, mitigate risks, or strengthen the resilience of their child.*

Vulnerable Adolescents Thematic Review  
(2019)



# Extra Familial Harm and Exploitation

Parents/carers still blamed and shamed and isolated

Parents/carers are often not included in key safeguarding decisions

Focus on parents/carers to safeguard rather than looking at disruption

We are listening to parents/carers too little and too late

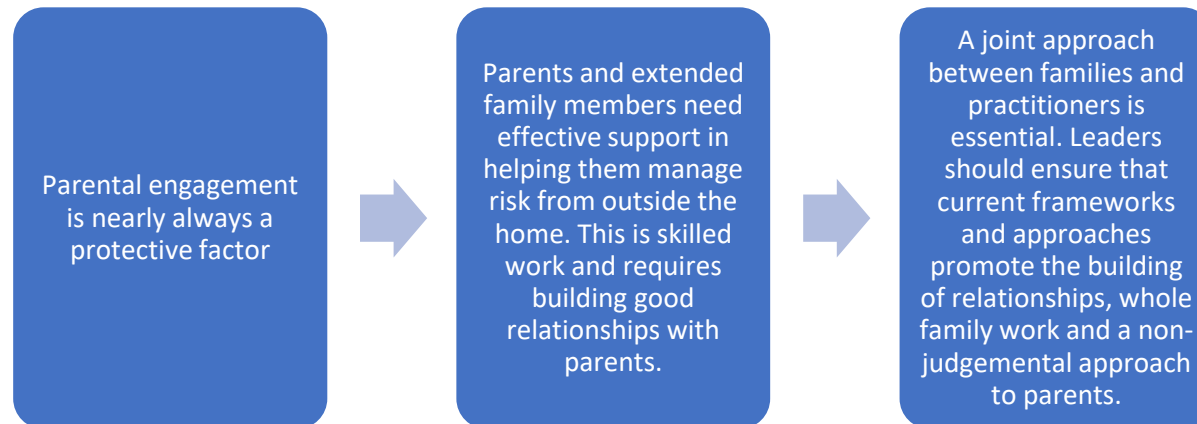
We need to be thinking about recovery

Not recognizing families as experts by experience

Families are traumatized by what is happening to their child



# Key findings & recommendations



## It was hard to escape

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**Safeguarding** children at risk from criminal exploitation

(2020)



# Embedding the Voice of a Parent

- “When you find out your child is caught up in the world of criminal exploitation it turns your world upside down. It has been the most terrifying experience of my life. A significant part of my role as a parent is about protecting my children. Overnight this is taken away. I had no control. I felt helpless and lost. My life and ability to protect my child becomes controlled by others, significantly the exploiter. I became reliant on a system to help me, one that I knew nothing about and had never been part of. I would plead (in my head) for the exploiters to release my child from their grip and let him come back to me.”

- Anon East Riding 2020

# Be Mindful of Language

Mum failed to protect her child from the presenting risks

*“Some parents, they collude with it (criminal exploitation) as they need the money.”*

Disinterested

Difficult to engage with

Mum doesn't seem to understand the risks

*“You need to be firmer with your child, not let her out.”*

*“You cant deny them of their rights, you cant keep her in.”*

Hard to reach

*“Mum wouldn't report her son missing.”*

Under / over protective

*“They don't come to meetings.”*

*“I gave them a safety plan but nothing changed.”*

# National Parents in Exploitation (NPIES)

Create services that value parents as critical safeguarding partners

Be transparent and honest about what you can and can not offer

Create advocacy opportunities for families

Relational working is key

Ensure language used is clear and easy to understand and doesn't blame families

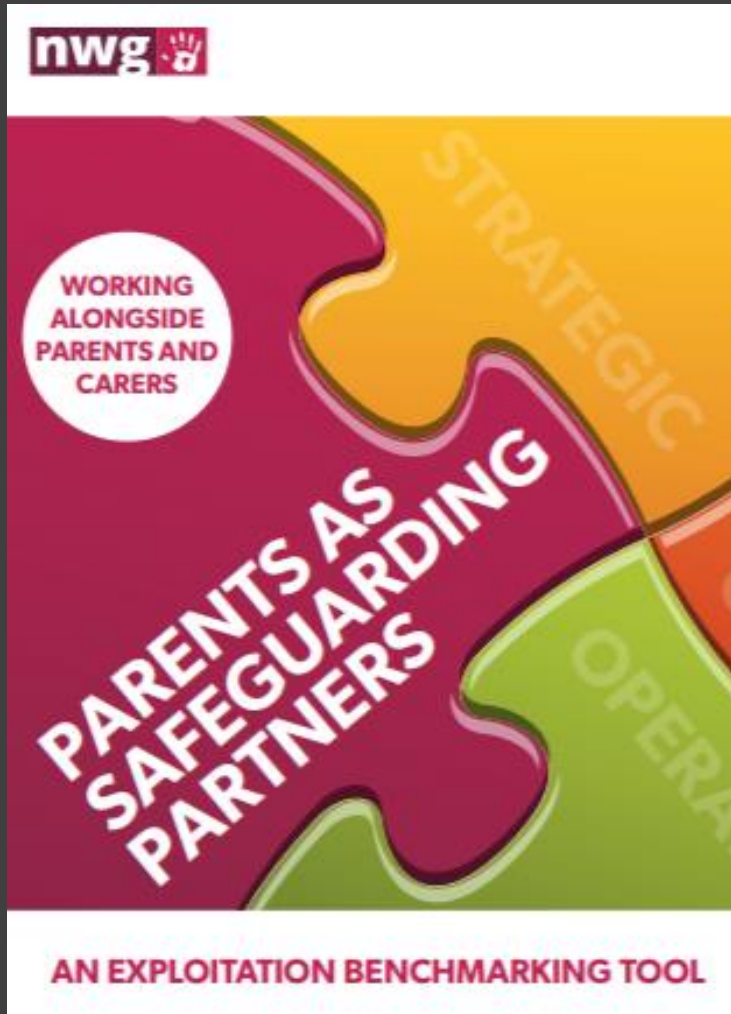
Build on a strength based whole family model

Consider how to re-engage with families where trust is broken down

Families are traumatized by what is happening to their child



# Parents as Safeguarding Partners





# Embedding the Voice of a Parent

“Becoming a safeguarding partner allowed me to regain a level of control. It assured me a way forward to proactively support my child again. Working so closely with professionals as a safeguarding partner and having involvement in strategic meetings keeps me informed, it allows me to feel I am being heard and I can drive forward what is needed for my son. It has opened my eyes to the dangers of exploitation to ALL children. As a partner I have got my voice back. It allows me to shape the approach taken by professionals to not only contribute to saving my own son but all exploited children and their families.”

Anon East Riding 2020



Recovery and post placement