

Research Project

Police's role in safeguarding and protecting children from serious violence

Professional Focus Group Information Sheet

Project Overview

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) has commissioned research into how police in England and Wales safeguard and protect children (at identified risk of) perpetrating serious violence and/or those who experience such violence.

The research seeks to explore:

- What represents 'best practice' in how police safeguard and protect these children
- Barriers and facilitators to implementing such an approach
- Any racial or other disparities in current practice, and how these could be addressed
- Frontline officers' awareness of safeguarding-led approaches to serious violence involving children
- Policy and practice changes required to support an improved safeguarding response, both strategically and operationally.

The research is being led by Professor Helen Beckett from the University of Lancashire and Professor Debra Allnock from the University of Bedfordshire, with the support of colleagues at these Universities, the Open University and the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme.

The project runs from September 2025 to February 2026 and involves four key strands of work:

- A desk-based review (of research literature, policy, review and inspections)
- **Stakeholder focus groups – the focus of this information sheet**
- A national survey to all police forces, mapping force responses
- 'Best practice' case studies.

The study has obtained ethical approval from The University of Lancashire's Business, Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Ethics Review Panel (Ref: BAHSS2 01407) and The University of Bedfordshire's Institute of Applied Social Research Ethics Panel.

Why am I being contacted about this?

We are running a series of sector and thematic-based professional focus groups and inviting relevant professionals, such as yourself, to register interest in one of these groups.

Please read this information sheet to understand what this will entail so you can make an informed choice as to whether you wish to participate. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us (contact information at the end of this document).

Registering for a session

The planned sessions, and links to register your interest, are below.

Please note that places (and waiting list places if required) will be allocated in order of registration, with the caveat of only **one place per organisation/division, per focus group** to allow engagement from a range of organisations.

You can register for both a sector-based and thematic focus-group if you wish to do so.

We will confirm if you have a place within a week of your registration and provide a link to a pre-engagement consent form at that time.

The registration links will remain open until two days before the date of each focus group or all available places have been allocated; whichever comes first.

If your organisation has approval processes in place about participation in external research, please ensure that you have obtained any necessary consents to participate.

Sector groups:

- Tuesday 25th November, 10am-12pm: Focus group for Youth Justice Agency professionals: [Focus Group for Youth Justice Agency professionals – Fill in form](#)
- Friday 28th November, 2pm-4pm - Focus group for Violence Reduction Unit Professionals: [Focus group for Violence Reduction Unit Professionals – Fill in form](#)

- Friday 28th November, 11am-1pm - Focus group for Multi-agency Partners (non-justice; including vol./comm. groups): [Focus Group for Multi-agency Partners \(non-justice; including vol./comm. groups\) – Fill in form](#)

Separate groups are also being run with police.

Thematic groups:

- Tuesday 25th November, 1pm-3pm: Multi-sectoral Focus Group on Minoritised Ethnicities: [Multi-sectoral Focus Group on Minoritised Ethnicities – Fill in form](#)
- Tuesday 25th November, 1.30pm-3.30pm: Multi-sectoral Focus Group on Victimisation/Perpetration Overlap: [Multi-sectoral Focus Group on Victimisation/Perpetration Overlap – Fill in form](#)
- Thursday 27th November, 10am-12pm : Multi-sectoral Focus Group on Children with SEND: [Multi-sectoral Focus Group on Children with SEND – Fill in form](#)

If you would like to take part in a focus group, but cannot do the dates above, you can register interest here in case we are able to add an additional cross-sectoral group in December/January for those these dates didn't suit: [Interest in focus group if alternative dates can be offered – Fill in form](#)

What would taking part involve?

All focus groups will take place online on Microsoft Teams. They will run for 1.5 – 2 hours, including a short break in the middle, and be co-facilitated by two members of the research team.

We anticipate between 6 and 12 participants in each group. The composition will be determined by who signs up for each workshop, although sector-based groups will only comprise people working in the same sector (policing, voluntary sector etc).

The exact focus of the discussion will be tailored to the composition of the group, but will be framed around the project research questions outlined on page one.

To support accurate capture of participant contributions, we would hope to utilise both audio/visual recording on Microsoft Teams, and the Teams transcription function (set to restricted access post-meeting). Recordings/transcriptions will be securely stored on a restricted-access project Teams site. They will only be seen by the research team and used for the purposes of creating anonymised summaries of focus group discussions.

You will be asked to provide your preferences around recording in an online consent form (hosted on Microsoft teams) that we will ask you to complete a minimum of two days prior to taking part so we can advise participants in advance as to the planned approach to recording.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can change your mind about participating at any time prior to the session. If you do decide to take part you can share as much or as little as you feel comfortable doing in the setting, and cease your participation in the discussion at any point.

Can I withdraw my contribution?

As we will be anonymising contributions at the point of transcription, you will only be able to withdraw/amend your contribution on the day of the focus group as after that we will not be able to distinguish different people's contributions. You can do this verbally at the end of the group, or by emailing the focus group facilitator by end of day, on the day of the group. Any contribution that you request to be removed will not be included in research data, but please be aware that if other participants made a similar point, the point will be retained on the basis of their contributions.

How will my data be used?

Your contributions will remain confidential to the research, unless something is shared that we have a statutory duty to report. They will only be publicly shared in anonymised form, with broad participant descriptors (such as social worker or VRU representative) used rather than specific role or organisation.

We will also ask participants to abide by Chatham House rules, so individuals' contributions are not shared outside of the focus group setting.

With your consent, we will maintain a copy of your contact information in order to send you a copy of the findings of the research, once approved by YEF. You will be asked to indicate your preferences around this in the consent form and, can of course, withdraw or give consent to be contacted subsequent to that by emailing us.

Your personal information will be stored in a password protected document that is stored separately from, and not linked to, your anonymised contributions to the research. All data will be stored in a restricted access University of Lancashire Teams site, accessible only to the project team. Data will be stored for seven years in line with University of Lancashire processes, then securely destroyed.

The University of Lancashire processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit". Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. The University privacy notice for research participants can be found here: [Privacy notice: research participants](#)

Risks and benefits of taking part

We do not anticipate any significant risks in relation to your participation in this research. We do however recognise that discussing familiar topics, in an unfamiliar

setting or with others with differing views on these, can hold potential for distress. We would encourage you to avail of any organisational support structures available to you, and should you require an external or more immediate source of support, you can find information on helplines here: [Mental health helplines](#)

We hope that participation offers an opportunity to share your views and experiences around what constitutes best practice safeguarding-led policing responses to children's experiences of serious violence and how this can be better embedded across England and Wales. The findings of the research will be used to inform YEF's recommendations for how the policing sector can support the reduction of serious violence amongst children and young people.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to contact the research leads and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy, or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then please contact the Ethics, Integrity and Governance Unit at the University of Lancashire at:

OfficerForEthics@lancashire.ac.uk

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113.

What do I do now?

If you wish to register interest in a focus group, please do so using the links above and we will be in touch to confirm availability of a space within five working days.

If you have any questions, or would like to further discuss any potential aspect of involvement, please also feel free to contact either of the project leads. You can contact Helen at hbeckett@lancashire.ac.uk or on 07811 790140. You can also contact Debra at debra.allnock@beds.ac.uk