KSCB have identified a number of priorities, including ensuring children are safeguarded and protected from harm, including domestic abuse, neglect and exploitation. Serious Case reviews, conducted across the country have identified that teenagers are not always sufficiently safeguarded.

Teenagers have been identified as a vulnerable group. Professionals sometimes miss the fact that young people are children in need as behaviour which communicates distress has been misread and young people have been treated as ‘nuisances’.

There has also been a tendency to label young people as ‘hard to reach’; whereas the issue is often that we lack the skills and systems to engage them. Teenagers are at an age of increased vulnerability due to their developmental stage. It is easy to overestimate their capacity to safeguard themselves.

During this time, it is imperative that young people have positive experiences and positive role models to guide them, helping them build resilience and plan for their future.

**Questions to consider**

Do we accept risk in teenagers because of their age? How do you manage and assess this risk? Do you involve teens in their own risk assessments? Do you know the signs of exploitation? Self-harm? Emotional distress in teenagers?

The THINK website (Teenage Health in Knowsley) has been designed to give young people one place where they can go to find out where to go to get the support they need. <https://www.thinkknowsley.co.uk/index.php>

There is great a deal of pressure on young people, e.g. social media, pressure to participate, peer pressure, school pressure to perform, pressure from parents. One of the consequences of social media is that anything posted can follow you anywhere.

These pressures can lead young people to be extremely vulnerable to abuse, self-harm, completing suicide or harming themselves in other ways.

Due to an immature prefrontal cortex, teens are not skilled at doing this. They do not take information, organise it and understand it in the same way that adults do – they have to learn how to do this. Young people become increasingly self-protecting in order to be able to thrive during adulthood, so they need practice at taking more responsibility for themselves. Cumulative exposure to appropriate risk builds resilience and coping skills, whereas cumulative disadvantage leads to increased vulnerability.

Risk taking is considered to be necessary for development, but teens do not judge risk well. Research shows that their brains are re-configuring, which can cause mental instability and increases vulnerability. To appreciate consequences of risky behaviour one has to have the ability to think through potential outcomes and understand the consequences.

What to do? The most important thing is to establish communication. Relationship is key to getting good information from children and this takes time. Children tell us again and again that they want us to listen to them! You also need to plan carefully and ensure that they are supported in getting access to the most appropriate help if they need it.

**7 MINUTE BRIEFING**

**Teenagers and Risk**

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**7 Minute**

**Briefing**

**7 Minute Briefing: Local Lessons**

**7**

**6**

**5**

**4**

**3**

**2**

**1**