

EMPOWER ME TOGETHER

EMPOWERMENT.

Empower Me Together - Safeguarding training

Liz Atkinson, Safeguarding Development Worker

Date: April 2026

Background

In January 2026 Angela Whiteley, the founder and Creative Director of **Empower Me Together**, attended a Working Together to Safeguard Children training session. She built on this by attending the Safeguarding Spotlight on Cuckooing training in March. At the end of this training session participants are asked to reflect on what their organisations can do to support young people or adults at risk of/experiencing exploitation through Cuckooing. Angela suggested that Cuckooing could become a theme for future creative workshops, culminating in a production that could be shared with other young people to raise awareness of this issue more widely.

Salford CVS support given

I visited Angela in April to find out more about how Empower Me Together support young people at risk of/experiencing exploitation. Their mission is to use creativity as a pathway to healing, confidence, and community connection. They achieve this through facilitating trauma-informed workshops in dance, drama, art, and poetry, helping individuals explore emotions, build resilience, and rediscover their voice.



We discussed the possibility of delivering a series of workshops for young people aged 16-18 at risk of/experiencing exploitation and the criminal justice system. These creative workshops would enable beneficiaries to do some initial individual reflective work incorporating themes of Cuckooing, County Lines and Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation whilst receiving support to address these issues and start to heal. These sessions would work towards beneficiaries collaborating to create a show that can be shared in schools and other education settings.

Jeremy, also from the Development Team, had already provided support to identify appropriate funding opportunities. With input from the wider Development Team, I have been able to connect Angela to organisations that work with a similar cohort of young people that might be interested in working collaboratively on this project, either hosting sessions or supporting their beneficiaries to participate.

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What difference did this support make?

“The support from Salford CVS has strengthened and enhanced my existing safeguarding knowledge, particularly by deepening my understanding of cuckooing and exploitation.

I would like to thank Liz, who delivered the safeguarding training. She is extremely knowledgeable and highly effective in her delivery, making complex safeguarding topics accessible, engaging, and impactful. Her approach enables organisations to reflect on their practice and make meaningful improvements in how they respond to safeguarding concerns.

Previously, the main focus of our work was trauma and emotional wellbeing. Through this training and support, we are now evolving our approach to combine trauma-informed practice with safeguarding awareness, ensuring that both are embedded throughout our delivery.

This includes drawing on lived experience, not only from the young people we support, but also from the professionals who work alongside them. By bringing these perspectives together, we are able to highlight the complexities of exploitation and safeguarding in a more meaningful and realistic way.

As a result, safeguarding is now at the forefront of our next production, which aims to raise awareness of the challenges young people face, the realities of exploitation, and the role of professionals and services in supporting and protecting them.

The support has also opened up opportunities for connection with other organisations, contributing to the development of a more joined-up approach when working with individuals at risk.

For the young people we work with, this means they are engaging in sessions that are not only creative and trauma-informed, but also grounded in real-life safeguarding awareness, helping them to feel seen, supported, and better understood.”

Who should an organisation contact at Salford CVS for similar support?

“Organisations can contact Salford CVS directly to access support, guidance, and training. The Development Team at Salford CVS, including Liz who delivers highly effective safeguarding training, provides valuable support in connecting organisations, offering advice, and identifying opportunities linked to safeguarding, funding, and community projects.

Through working with Jeremy, I also received support in understanding the funding process, which has strengthened my knowledge and confidence in developing and progressing funding opportunities for our work.

Thank you all for your continued support and the valuable impact you are making.”