



Committee and Date

People Overview Committee

29<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Item

**9**

Public

## CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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### 1. Summary

This report provides current information regarding child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing in Shropshire.

### 2. Recommendations

Scrutiny Panel to note the information.

## REPORT

### Current picture of CSE in Shropshire:

At present in Shropshire, CSE is an identified risk for 72 children, mostly females, only five are male (6%) and some of these children are children who are placed here from other local authorities. The breakdown of the risk level is as follows:

Being exploited: 1

High: 11

Medium: 30

Low: 30

All children who are identified at risk of CSE are tracked to ensure that the risk level is being appropriately managed and that the work being carried out with these children is effective and reducing the risk. All the children identified at a risk level medium and above have allocated social workers and their risk addressed either through Children in Need plans or Child Protection plans.

The child who is identified as *Being Exploited* is a Shropshire child placed in a specialist care facility out of county, she is not currently being exploited but she has been groomed to such an extent that if she were to go missing she could easily fall prey to perpetrators who would recognise her vulnerability.

### **Missing:**

The links with children who go missing and CSE are strong. Almost all of the children currently tracked for CSE have been reported missing or have had unreported missing episodes. School attendance can be very poor and we see many cases where attendance and/or truanting at school is being monitored by the Education Access Service, and is a concern. Not all children who are reported missing will be sexually exploited, however, the greater the number of missing episodes the risk of them being exploited or becoming engaged in criminal activity, increases. In Shropshire we hold a Missing Intervention meeting whenever a child has had three missing episodes within a 90 day period. If the child is already known to children's services their plans are reviewed accordingly to address the risk of running away and if necessary a re-assessment of their needs. If a child is not known to our services then agency checks may be made and a discussion with the family to see if the family might benefit from having a social work assessment carried out to address the needs and to put support in place.

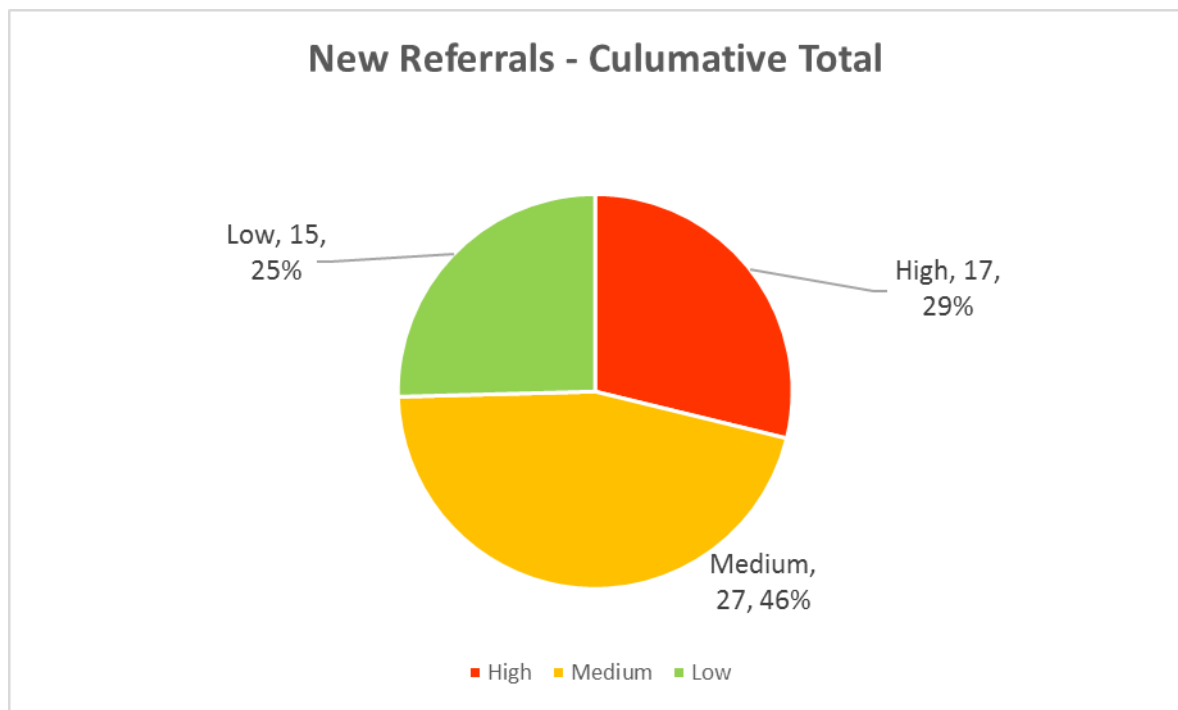
### **CSE Triage:**

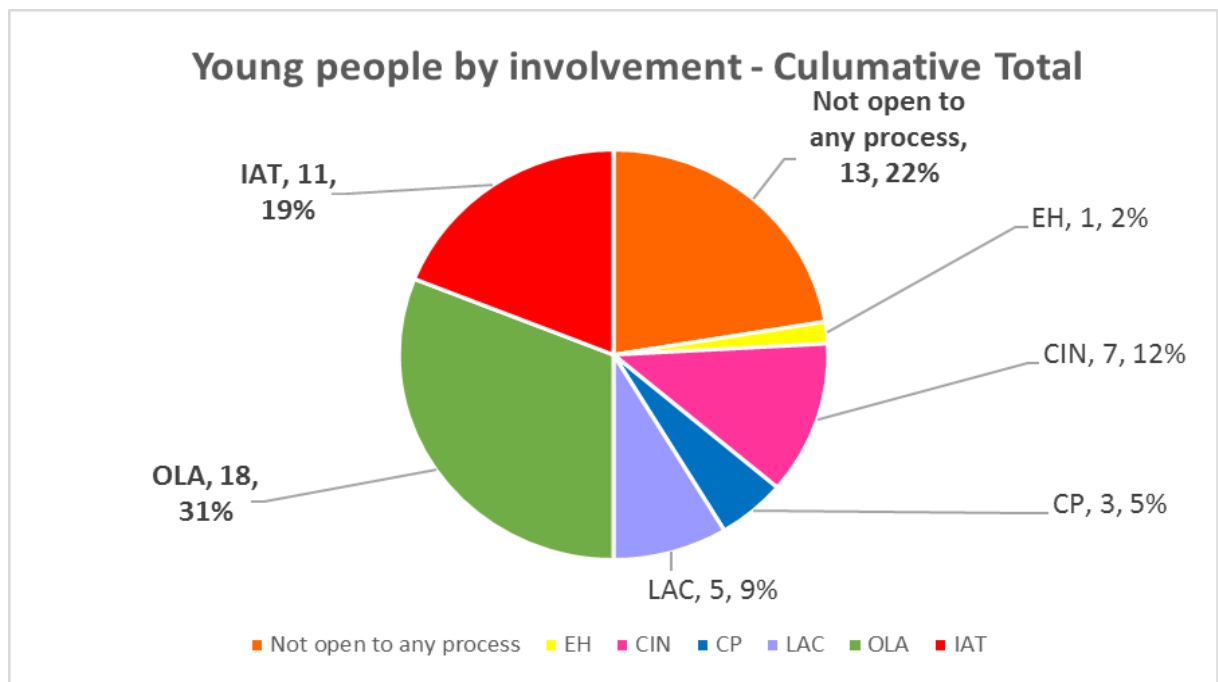
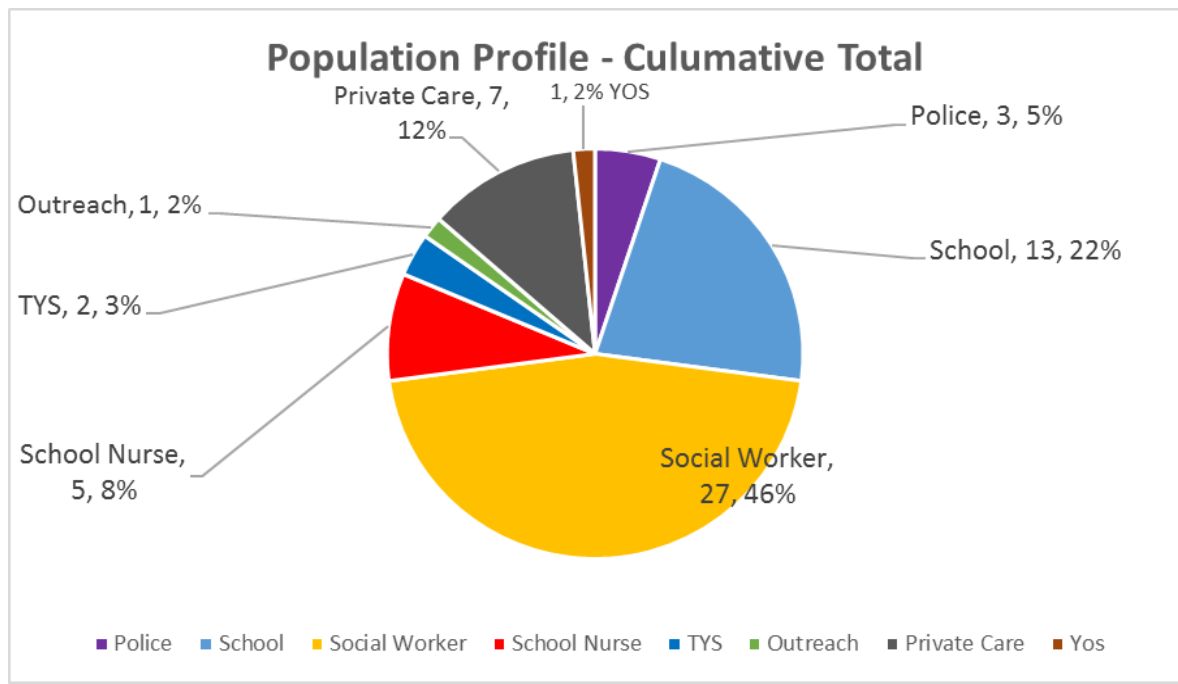
A weekly triage is held to discuss any new referrals that have been received, and to agree the risk level identified. Any updated referrals that have been submitted to demonstrate a reduction or increase of risk are also discussed. A CSE tracker is updated to reflect the current risk level for every child that it referred into safeguarding for CSE. Triage is carried out by Social Care Service Manager with Strategic responsibility for CSE, CSE Operational Lead and representatives from West Mercia Police CSE team. Triage allows us to share information, to receive and give updates on current cases and investigations, and to have an overview of the CSE picture in Shropshire and the effectiveness of the work that is being carried out with the families, to address the risks for their child.

### **CSE Panel:**

A monthly panel is held to discuss, at a strategic level the picture of CSE in Shropshire. A monthly update is presented to demonstrate the levels of referrals for that month, where they are being referred from and the nature and themes being identified. Discussion is held to acknowledge any information received in relation to newly identified perpetrators and where they are operating and who they are linked to, either perpetrator or victims? Updates on known or new hotspots identified in the county as being used for exploitation and how we can disrupt this. If a new referral has been received for a Shropshire child who is identified at high risk or being exploited, that case will be discussed from a strategic perspective to consider the implications for us strategically. What activities do we have concerns about, who we have concerns about and how, as a multi-agency panel our individual service area can work together to tackle and address the risks for Shropshire? The CSE panel comprises of managers and safeguarding leads from a variety of agencies, including social care, police, education, health, mental health, colleges, targeted services, substance misuse, sexual health, 18+ team and is chaired by the Service Manager with Strategic responsibility for CSE.

### **New CSE Referrals April to November 2017**





### **OFSTED reflections (embargoed until 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017)**

We have had some very positive feedback following the OFSTED inspection in regard to management of CSE and children who go missing, key highlights include:

- Children who go missing from home or are at risk of child sexual exploitation are identified quickly by effective partnership working in Compass, and receive a timely assessment.
- Specialist workers are allocated promptly with swift completion of return home interviews and child sexual exploitation risk screening tools.
- Once needs are identified, children and families are offered a range of services.
- Cases are reviewed regularly at well-attended monthly panels with clear actions to reduce risks for children.
- Rigorous arrangements trace children who go missing from education.
- Multi-agency partners respond appropriately to children who experience risks associated with offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, being sexually exploited or going missing.
- Effective plans help to reduce the risk of harm or actual harm for the vast majority of these vulnerable children.
- Children receive timely return home interviews when they have been missing.
- The local authority has undertaken significant work to safeguard children at risk of child sexual exploitation, built on well-established strategic and operational relationships with partners such as West Mercia police. This has enabled rigorous responses to safeguard children and young people who go missing or who are at risk of sexual exploitation. A recently formed task and finish group is scoping work to align gangs, missing children and county line vulnerabilities linked to the child sexual abuse strategic group.

### **CSE Case Study – AB**

\* all identifying features have been removed and the case anonymised to protect the identity of the young female – parental consent has been obtained to tell her story.

#### **Background:**

AB came to children's services attention in September 2012, she was then 14 years old and was being taken by her distant cousin, a 16 year old female to meet with Asian males her cousin was meeting online, via various apps but the meet-ups were being arranged via Blackberry Messenger (BBM), BBM allowed users to broadcast open messages to anyone who had the app. The cousin used it to request lifts from their hometown to a local train station. Men would come to the town and pick the girls up and drop them off at the station.

The girls would then catch a train to Birmingham, once there, they would once more broadcast an open BBM message requesting to be picked up from Birmingham city centre to be taken to various parts about 4/5 miles outside of the city centre. They were always picked up. They would meet with various males in parks, street corners, were taken to parties and in one instance were being taken to a hotel, when fortunately police intercepted the vehicle and found the girls with two males.

This pattern of behaviour continued for several weeks. AB was sneaking out of her home in the early hours of the morning, not returning home at her curfew time and refused to attend school. AB's parents struggled to cope and were frightened that their daughter may one day be found seriously injured or worse. The girls were being supplied with alcohol and cannabis by the males they were meeting, and this in itself was an issue because of how it affected both girls ability to function. Neither of the girls understood at the time that they were at risk of significant harm and believed all of the males they were meeting to be their friends, not as men who were grooming them for their own gratification. At the time of this situation for AB, CSE was just starting to be fully understood in Shropshire. AB's exploitation was occurring against the back drop of the Rotherham cases being brought to huge public attention via the national press because of the successful prosecution of a gang of Asian males for sexually exploiting white females in Yorkshire. Although AB and her cousin were always picked up by Asian males as a consequence of their broadcasted BBM messages to meet with Asian males, it remains a rare incidence of CSE in Shropshire which involved Asian males as perpetrators, overwhelmingly we continue to see white male perpetrators.

### **SCIE review:**

This case was subsequently used as a case study for a SCIE review for Shropshire to learn from the family's experiences, and to see if we as a local authority could improve how we managed cases of this nature in future. It proved very beneficial and changed the way we started to assess and track cases where CSE was identified as a risk for a child.

### **5 year follow up – mother's reflections:**

Happily, the situation for AB improved significantly and the following is a current update for AB written by her mother;

*AB was in such a bad place a few years back, on the verge of if not involved in child trafficking through no fault of her own. She struggled for friendship and clung onto a certain person that offered her this (or that's what she thought)!! This friend actually led her into one of the most dangerous escapades a young girl could be involved in!! This 'friend' would entice her off to all sorts of places to meet up with young Asian men that she had contacted on line and had never met or even spoken to before. Soon enough the distance this friend was taking her was miles away from home at all hours of the day and night. Eventually, after many months of her going missing and us reporting it to the police we had the involvement of her school, Police, Social Services,*

*Education Welfare officers, Barnardo's and Targeted Youth. She had put herself in so much danger that she was placed on a child protection scheme by Social Services and was red flagged on the police database as highly vulnerable.*

*There is nothing worse for a parent than sitting at home wondering where your child is and if they are safe. This happened on many days/nights throughout a 12 month period. On one occasion the police had been searching for her in Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Telford, Kidderminster and Worcester working on information they had picked up and she was eventually found walking along a road in Birmingham. She had no idea of the danger she was in and would not accept that she had done so. She was of the opinion that nothing can hurt me I'm invincible!*

*This situation went on and on getting worse and worse. She would not listen to anyone who tried to help her and was of the opinion that we were all just trying to spoil her fun! Targeted Youth became involved and soon the situation started to improve. Dot sat and talked to AB about how she felt, what she wanted to do and reasons behind her actions without judging her or lecturing her as that obviously wasn't going to work. AB eventually began to trust Dot from Targeted Youth and built up a really good relationship with her. She helped in so many ways. Not just with the problem of putting herself in danger but also with building her self-esteem and confidence.*

*Involvement from the police and council helped to move the 'friend' and her family out of the area. They also served a harbouring notice on them to stop any contact of any kind between them and AB. This was a huge step forward. AB was so low, hurt and confused by all that had gone on and had no friends and no confidence or self esteem whatsoever. Dot helped her to look forward again and to build her confidence to become who she is now.*

*AB is now one very confident and head strong young lady. She works full time for our local supermarket, is learning to drive, has just moved into her own home and is always out and about with new friends. God only knows where we would all be right now without the help and guidance from Dot and all the other agencies involved. it could have been a very different outcome. I will never be able to repay all those people for what they did at what was a very traumatic time for us all.*

*Thank you again*

*Mum*

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

(NB this will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

There is a risk associated with CSE and is therefore a continued risk for vulnerable children and young people in Shropshire.

#### 4. Financial Implications

This is an update report and so has no financial implications.

#### 5. Background

This update report is the latest in a regular series of updates on CSE for Scrutiny Committee.

#### 6. Additional Information

None

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>
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Presentation on CSE to Young People's Scrutiny Committee 24 June 2015
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Update on CSE to Young People's Scrutiny Committee 1 February 2017
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<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b>
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Cllr Nick Bardsley
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<b>Local Member</b>
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All Members
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<b>Appendices</b>
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None
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