

# What we can learn from known victims of child exploitation.

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# Food for thought.....

- In England, a child is someone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Once they turn 18, they are legally an adult. Therefore it is important to remember you will be hearing about the experiences of CHILDREN.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) guidance, applies to all children up to the age of 18 years whether living with their families, in state care, or living independently (p: 7) – which means we all have a duty to safeguard.

## Quote:

*'20 years ago children who were sexually exploited were prosecuted as child prostitutes rather than safeguarded and protected...Thankfully, over the last 20 years big progress has been made in how professionals and wider society understand and respond to CSE. Yet in recent years, new forms of exploitation have been uncovered and we need to learn the same lessons as we had to with CSE, in order to stop treating children as criminals and give them the help they need.'* (Children's Society, Feb 2019)

# CCE audit.....the context:

In March 2019, representatives from CSC, YJS, Early Help, police, CSE lead, education and Young Addactions completed a multi agency audit around CCE – county lines. We identified 6 young people where there are known or suspected concerns in regard to County Lines. Each agency provided information from their own agency records, then this was pulled together and an overall analysis and findings being identified and agreed.

# Young people's profile:

Cody (15 years old).....exploited from age 13

Household – mum, ½ sister (aged 1)

DV – from the age of 8 years Cody was exposed to a pattern of domestic abuse within his mother's relationships.

Parental substance misuse – again from aged 8, his mother's partners and his mother have had various substance misuse issues including alcohol and drugs.

Stability – very little, a number of house moves, poor school attendance noted since he was aged 10 years, permanently excluded by the age of 12 years old, attending TMBSS.

Behaviour – starting getting into petty crime (theft) from aged of 12 years, he received a community resolution in 2016 and the year after a caution for receiving stolen goods and the year after had witnessed the attempted murder of peer (thought to be linked to county lines).

Substance misuse – known to be heavily using cannabis at the age of 13 years.

CSC – support has been put in place for Cody and his family since Cody has been 10 years old, very little changes, ongoing and persistent issues of emotional harm and neglect, he has been on a CP Plan twice and remains on a CP plan currently.

Exploitation – first mention of his association with other known exploited young people in 2017 at the same time information that Cody was also using cocaine, making Cody just 13 years old.

# Billy (aged 16 years).....exploited from age 13

Household – mum, step dad, ½ sister aged 8

Education – permanently excluded from school at age of 13, following a number of fixed term exclusions since the age of 9 years old, attended school over the border in Wales, low attendance, concerns of substance misuse.

Substance misuse – used cannabis and disclosure of ecstasy when he was 14 (reported a friend's dad was supplying this).

behaviour – from the age of 14, Billy's mum has been seeking support with his behaviour, described as difficult to manage 'a handful'. At age 14 was working with YOS on a 6 month referral order for theft.

Exploitation – concerns that he was purchasing his drugs on a daily basis from Liverpool dealers at the age of 15, at around the same time intelligence being received that he was dealing drugs.

Harm – in August 2018 he was found to be in possession of weapons and intent to supply cannabis, 10 days later he was significantly beaten up with potential life threatening injuries.

# Kim (aged 16 years)...exploited from aged 15

Household – mum, dad, sister aged 12.

Education – excellent attendance and described as bright pupil, up until permanent exclusion at aged 15 for bringing drugs into school.

CSE – sexually exploited at age 15 years old.

Substance misuse – by the age of 15 concerns of Kim using a variety of drugs including: MDMA; Cannabis; Alcohol; Amphetamine; LSD; Xanax; Ketamine.

Exploitation – disclosed at aged 15 that she was dealing cannabis to friends that she was getting from 19 year old male.

# Henry (aged 17).....exploited from age 13

Household – mum, dad (separated), sister aged 22 and sister aged 19

CSC – referred to CSC at age 13, living with dad, concerns dad exposing Henry to substance misuse, possible drug running for dad. On CP plan since the age of 14 – neglect

Substance misuse – using cannabis from age of 13 – intel that also using Class A (crack cocaine)- going out not returning until 5 am – NO reports of missing from father.

Education – problematic since age 11 – poor attendance (dropping to 55% in 2016), Henry was permanently excluded at the age of 15 years, attended TMBSS.

Exploitation – at the age of 14, his house was searched and a number of weapons found, at the same time intelligence that he was selling drugs to friends – he was being exploited by his sister’s boyfriend at this time

# Lucas (aged 18).....exploited from age 16

Household – mum, but he lives with grandparents, has sister aged 14 and 2 brothers aged 16 and 4

CSC – very little history, first became known to CSC at age 17 when a strategy meeting was held in response to concerns around exploitation, it was reported that Liverpool OCGs are very threatening and violent. They control the teenage group and regularly plug the cocaine up their rectum.

Behaviour – age 11 received a community resolution for assault.

Education – 1 fixed term exclusion at aged 15.

Exploitation – aged 16 intelligence he is selling cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine to school friends and intelligence he is being exploited by the Boris Line drug dealers.

Substance misuse - aged 17 goes to live with grandparents who have little control over him, thought to be heavily smoking cannabis.



# Charlie (aged 16).....exploited from age 13

Household – mum, dad, sister aged 22 and sister aged 6

Substance misuse – using cannabis from age 13/14, disclosed 2019 that also using cocaine.

Education – fixed term exclusions from age of 14 years

Exploitation – his phone number found on the mobile of a drug dealer during prison cell search when Charlie was aged 14

Harm – intel last year to state it was believed he had a shot gun held to his chest by Scouse (drug dealer) – Scouse drug dealer is believed to have taken all of Charlie's drugs from which he had just been reloaded. Charlie aged 15.

Aged 15 – intel that Charlie is plugging drugs in his rectum.

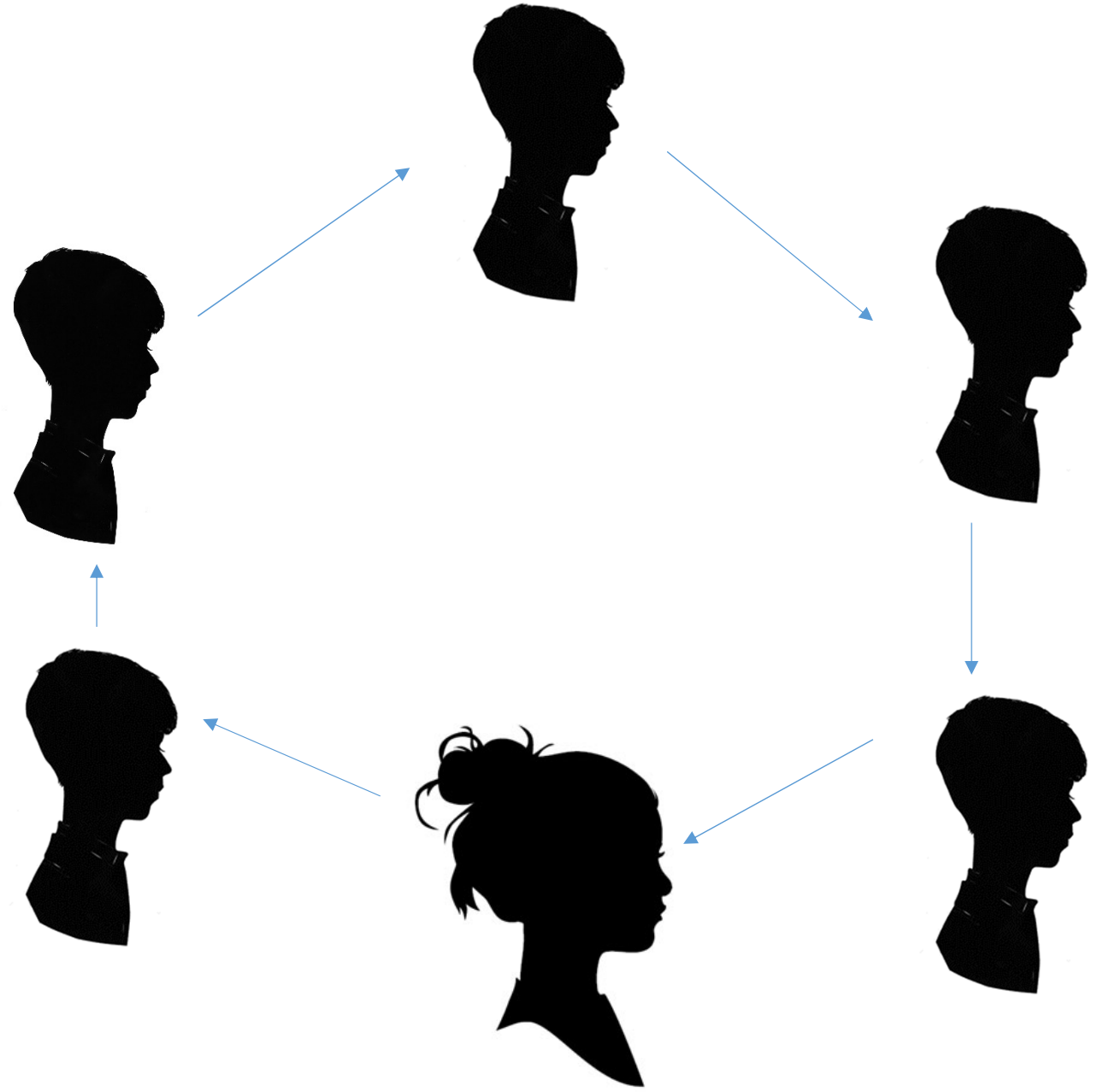
March 2019 he was taken into police protection for his own safety.

# Links

Cody  
Henry  
Lucas  
Charlie  
Billy  
Kim

All friends in community.

Henry selling drugs for brother in law, which continued even when brother in law imprisoned, search of cell found mobile phone which contained Charlie's phone number, they all except for Billy attended the same school at some point. All cannabis users, likely supply from the same source.



# Commonalities.....so what made these children vulnerable to being targeted

- Inconsistent, neglectful parenting, lack engagement with support services, child and/or parents, parental separation (conflict), drugs, alcohol, domestic abuse, criminality, hard to reach;
- Frequent house moves – lack of stability, impacts on community identity
- Poor school attendance – starting in primary school in some instances
- Exclusions (fixed term and permanent)
- Being in alternative education provision such as TMBSS or school being out of authority area (less visible)
- Missing episodes
- Anti social behaviour that escalates into offending, police and JYS involvement
- Substance misuse – frequent use of cannabis
- Child sexual exploitation
- Associations with others involved in county lines/exploitation

# Recommendations

- 1. It is much easier to stop children becoming involved in gangs than it is to get them out.** To achieve this we need a 'life-course' approach recognising that while a child may be drawn into a gang as an adolescent, the underlying reasons why they were susceptible almost certainly appeared years earlier (Children's Commissioner, 2019); **consideration needs to be given to the early help approach, consent is often seen as a barrier to working with these young people/families however we need to start thinking outside of the box and overcoming the young person's/parent's resistance and engage THEM with US**, which is also highlighted by OFSTED (2018) 'professionals need to work flexibly and continue to 'say with the child', even when they are unwilling to engage' (P:10);
- 2. Schools need to keep children in school by responding to challenging behaviour and additional needs.** Action needs to be taken to combat schools who persistently exclude or off-roll (Children's Commissioner. 2019); we need to consider the best approach to managing young people who represent challenges, we know that exclusions and TMBSS only serves to increase risk and vulnerability, isolation from school will push these young people further into the clutches of perpetrators and increase the opportunities for exploitation;
- 3. A multi agency approach to tackling the issues of county lines needs to be developed, screening tools to help identify vulnerable young people and a pathway and framework for supporting these young people is required.**

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- 4. **Police intelligence and concerns around exploitation needs to be shared timely and in co-ordinated way, not just with Children's Social Care but with the multi agency partnership**, often it will be agencies working directly with the young people and family that hold the most informed, up to date information, to inform decision making, we need to develop processes that overcome the barriers to sharing information so that a joined up approach can be developed.
- 5. **Consideration of what role housing play**, it is noted that many of the young people subject to this audit have had a number of house moves (reasons unknown as housing were not part of audit group) but it was raised by Julie Duncan that Housing are a key partner and could trigger early help support by flagging up issues early on that may later prevent evictions.
- 6. Addactions have launched a policy with public Health regarding when a child is excluded on the grounds of substance misuse the school need to complete the SMARTER screening tool, Sonya Jones advised this is not being followed, this needs to be implemented and embedded with all schools as will enable a young person access appropriate supports in timely manner. Consideration to inviting Addactions to Pupil Planning Meetings may help to overcome parental resistance to support for their child.

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- 7. Children Social Care need to consider thresholds for ongoing support and intervention following assessments, as step down too soon will lead to re-referral and possible delays in the young person accessing support at the appropriate level of threshold i.e. CIN. Both Addactions and YJS have experienced other agencies pulling away or refusing to get involved because they are seen as a lead agency to support the young person and family, what is needed is collaboration between agencies and wrap around support through a multi agency approach.
- 8. YJS to get involved with young people at the second community resolution, this will increase preventative support/work.
- 9. Drug screening in custody has been agreed by the lead inspector (Gordan Kaye) as of 01.03.19 however this has not yet been implemented due to changes to Addaction in April – this needs to be implemented and embedded in practice, as this drug screening can trigger supports for the young person.

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- 10. A Liaison and Diversion worker (YJS) to be put in place, to assess a young person's emotional and mental health at points of crisis in the custody suite and in courts (interviews are being held in May, worker is already in place in Worcestershire). This worker will be able to signpost and refer on and provide short term interventions.
- 11. Consideration for Health agencies to be given for screening in hospitals and other unscheduled health care settings when young people present with injuries.
- 12. Cross border working with Wales is required – Julie Duncan to liaise with Chris Kerry to identify what young people who reside in Shropshire but attend schools across the border and Julie to establish links with those schools to ensure they are aware of Shropshire's Early Help and Safeguarding Pathways

Thank you for listening

Any questions, comments or reflections, further recommendations needed?