



Committee and Date

People Overview

8 February 2023

Item

Public



Child Criminal Exploitation

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1. Synopsis

On 16 November 2022 the partnership presented to the People’s Overview Committee a presentation regarding Child Exploitation in Shropshire, in summary the presentation focused on:

- The progress in relation to our joint partnership response to Child Exploitation since we last presented in 2019.
 - This included an overview of the OFSTED inspection findings in which Shropshire was judged to be ‘good’.
 - The learning from Multi – agency audits, Learning Reviews & the Telford Enquiry
- Assurance that children are always understood to be victims and supported as such, including:
 - Referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) – to ensure they are formally recognised as so.
- Chair of the Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership updated the Committee on his overview and assurance, this included:

- Reassurance that Child Exploitation is a Priority Business Group for the Partnership and has a Business Plan with clearly defined actions and impact outcomes.
- Links to the Violent Crime work and Drug and Alcohol Group.
- Partner Agency Exploitation pathway (recently revised)
- Partners presented a summary of their agencies contribution to addressing Child Exploitation.
 - West Mercia Police provided reassurance that:
 - Exploitation is a key strategic priority for West Mercia Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in building safer and secure communities
 - Reflected in the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan 2021-2025 and West Mercia Police force priorities.
 - They contribute to the joint Adult and Children's Exploitation Sub-Group as part of the Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership arrangements
 - Exploitation Pathway
 - They co-ordinate and chair the Shropshire Serious and Organised Crime Focus Group Meeting - previously the Serious and Organised Crime Joint Advisory Group (SOCJAG) Partnership Forum.
- Shared examples of Disruption activity, across the partnership including:
 - Mapping Meetings
 - Disruption Meetings – including plans to use a range of disruption techniques.
 - Strategy Meetings – individual and groups of children.
 - Children exiting gangs, use of legislation and plans to support young people.
 - Community Awareness events, representation from all partners.
 - Quarterly Newsletter
 - Multi agency triage/ and panel .
- Discussed 2 detailed case studies of work undertaken and the impact it has had, including the voice and experience of the young person.

The outcome of this presentation was a request from the Chair for an update to a future meeting of what action partners have taken in response to the recommendations from the Telford Enquiry. The purpose of this report is to provide those updates.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. Update for Members in relation to the Telford Enquiry into Child Sexual abuse and the recommendations. The following assurances have been provided by partners.

SSCP

- A quarterly SSCP Child Exploitation priority group is held.
- Childrens Services provides a data set to the SSCP to inform discussions around Exploitation.

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- SSCP raise awareness around the importance of sharing information through the Learning Briefings sent out to the partnership.
- The SSCP has planned a strategy planning and priority setting day for Friday 3rd Feb 2023.
- SSCP led a multi-agency task and finish group to pilot a pathway for adults at risk of exploitation including children transitioning into adulthood. The pilot concluded with a recommendation that ASC should continue to lead on the allocation meeting.
- SSCP has now led on two MACFA (multi agency case file audits) audits on exploitation. Monthly child journey audits are held where young people are being exploited (led by the TREES Operational Lead) and a multi-agency CE audit is currently in progress led by Children Social Care. Audit activity gives clear assurance about progress in good practice across the multi agency partnership and identifies any areas of concern or for development.
- There is a clear escalation procedure in place on the SSCP Website for complaints

Children's Social Care & Early Help

- Early Help have strong links with the Shropshire Youth Association
- TREES Operational CSE and Missing Lead for Children's Services produces a monthly report that is shared with the SSCP.
- TREES secured additional (permanent) funding from Shropshire Council, expanding the team to its current structure:
1 x team manager (operational lead), 1 x SSW, 2 x SWs, 3 x FSWs and 1 x young person's substance misuse advisor (funded by Public Health)
- Developing the role of the CE SSW towards raising the CE profile, skills and knowledge across Childrens Services.
- The CATE Pathway has been reviewed resulting in a revision to the Shropshire CE pathway. The new Pathway was implemented in Dec 2021
- TREES staff access relevant training, predominantly through the National Working Group Network.
- The TREES Service Manager and Operational Lead offer CE training as part of the learning offer to the workforce
- CE is now embedded into the Induction Programme for all new starters.
- A parent leaflet has been developed that is being widely used
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/24227/ce-in-shropshire-leaflet-for-parents-carers.pdf>
- A Corporate complaints process in place – to date no complaints have been raised in respect to TREES.

Education

- TREES, Early Help, Education Access, We are With You and the Branch Project offers monthly consultations to schools
- A Learning Brief was sent out to all schools (April 2022) following the multi-agency case file audit on "**Exploitation – referrals into Channel panel**".
- Missing Monday weekly meeting has been set up by Education.
- Head Teachers are now informed of students identified with an exploitation risk through triage. (Recommendation from Missing Monday meeting)

- Child exploitation (including sexual exploitation) is an area of focus in both the Raising Awareness in Safeguarding and Child Protection training for staff and School Designated Safeguarding Lead (Newly appointed and update) training.
- Schools should be compliant with statutory guidance on [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Locally schools use different schemes of work in delivering this education.
- West Mercia Police ran a training session for schools on CSE/CCE including local contextual information in November 2022.
- The Safeguarding team consistently promotes the use of Smarter screening and CE risk assessment to settings during safeguarding consultancies.
- Programmes of CE awareness is incorporated into PSHE school curriculum.
- Government Information Sharing Guidance has been promoted in the latest update of the LA Child Protection Policy Template (and the importance of staff understanding this). There would be benefit in strengthening key messages in Raising Awareness Training. The CE Pathway and Information Sharing protocols relating to CE (including intelligence sharing with Police as well as Compass) are included in the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Newly appointed and Update) Training.
- The CE Pathway now makes it clear that **all** children who are assessed using the Child Exploitation Assessment Tool should be referred to Compass so that Child Exploitation Triage can map “hotspots” of exploitation.
- There is an established multi-agency approach to avert permanent exclusions where exploitation is a key risk factor. This involves Education Access, Early Help, Social Care, We are With You and any other relevant agencies involved with the young person, working with schools to ensure where possible that children and young people maintain their school placement. This approach includes access to a range of diversionary and mentoring activities to enable young people to divert away from exploitation.
- A representative from Education Access Service sits on CE triage ensuring appropriate information sharing between agencies, to raise awareness of local hotspots and local themes.
- A learning briefing specific to exploitation was undertaken in April 22.
- All schools have the ability to sign up to the Safer School Initiative: [Safer Schools.doc \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#).

Police

- Two new police officer roles have been created to support county lines activity in Shropshire. These are for Police Constables performing the role of Neighbourhood Disruption Officers. West Mercia is the first policing area in our organisation to have these. They are line managed by the Local Organised Crime Team (LOCT) Sergeant, but also work closely with our Safer Neighbourhood Teams. They support our Safer Neighbourhood Team in completing cuckooing visits at the addresses of those at risk of exploitation by drug suppliers. They also target drug supply hotspots, particularly relating to County Lines; execute drugs warrants and target county lines perpetrators using the road and rail network throughout our county. These officers have proved to be a huge success and it is believed they have significantly contributed to the reduction of county lines gangs operating within Shropshire.
- Significant improvement has been seen in processes relating to safeguarding those at risk of ‘cuckooing’. Plans are more accessible for Officers and the Police have introduced a process to review and grade the risk posed. Further to this the Police now meet with partner agencies to review the plans and the

safeguarding in place. This is an extremely beneficial process that ensures the Police provide appropriate safeguarding.

- West Mercia Police have strengthened the relationship with Merseyside Police and work with them regularly to disrupt and dismantle county lines gangs. They now have numerous joint policing operations in Shropshire where West Mercia and Merseyside police officers work together to disrupt the gangs who are known to exploit our most vulnerable. Activity is focussed where it is believed the highest risk exists at the time. Both Police authorities have had significant results working in this way and have realised many benefits in doing so.
- West Mercia Police has worked with the local authority to obtain an injunction to prevent gang related violence and drug dealing activity with a view to protecting a child from the risk of being involved in such activity. These injunctions can impose restrictions on the individual, preventing them from engaging in, encouraging or assisting gang-related violence or gang-related drug dealing activity. This joint work will continue to obtain further injunctions where appropriate.
- West Mercia Police has introduced the use of Child Exploitation Warning Notices which formally notify the suspected perpetrator that the police have intelligence linking them to being involved in the exploitation of children. These have been issued to suspected perpetrators on a number of occasion within the last 12 months and they are considered to compliment other disruption tactics.

STW ICB

- The ICS is seeking copies of all children's safeguarding training content from local health providers. This will allow a review to be undertaken of the quality, consistency and content of such training. The intention is to achieve a universal standard for safeguarding training across all local health providers. In addition to this, the ICS has started work on designing a specific CSE case file audit.
- Further, Children's Safeguarding Quality Assurance visits have commenced since the creation of the ICS on 1 July 2022. These visits include themes from the Inquiry and recommendations relating to CSE with action plans for NHS providers to complete. To date, visits have been made to Robert Jones Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Foundation Trust and the British Pregnancy Advisory Service. Visits to BeeU (children and adolescent mental health service) and sexual health services are planned. These QA visits include CSE questions to ensure that staff know how to identify the signs of CSE and know how to refer cases.
- System-wide GP training on CSE commenced on 21 September 2022 delivered by named GPs and the Deputy Designate Safeguarding Nurse. The session was recorded so that it can be utilised across the wider primary care service. It includes CSE case studies, videos, explorative questions and a minimum pass mark is set.
- The ICS is working with the Director of Delivery and transformation to ensure that the offer to victims and survivors of CE, including sexual exploitation, who need trauma-related mental health services, is part of the planned commissioning arrangements. The ICS has also asked NHS England to nominate a lead for commissioning in the area to work as part of the working group on this point.

- The local Mental Health Trust (MPFT) delivers trauma-informed care training to staff which is endorsed by the Care Quality commission. Additional resource requirements are being scoped and identified to help further improve local service provision. MPFT have also produced a specialist video looking into trauma-informed care which can be used in trauma-informed care training workshops.
- If a child is known to be at risk of/subject to CSE a template letter is sent to the child's GP practice to alert medical practitioners that the child/young person is at risk of CSE. This letter is attached to child's electronic record and/or placed in the patient's notes which ensures that the letter transfers to a new GP practice if the child relocates.
- The ICS is also required to raise the issue of flagging CSE concerns on a child's GP records at national and regional meetings.
- GP practices have been asked to record data on the number of children and young people considered to be at risk of/subject to CSE and to ensure records are flagged accordingly. Digital recording issues are under development and NHS England has been approached to explore this at a national level. In the meantime, the ICS has designated named GPs to devise a surgery QA visit schedule to cover this subject.

Licensing & Trading Standards

- A multi-agency Working Group is being established across Telford, Shropshire and Wolverhampton
- Where there are any concerns about an application, this will lead to specific tasked activity, including, where necessary a multi-agency response, in order to address those concerns.
- Visits are routinely undertaken in respect of almost all premises licence and private hire operator applications prior to issue. These visits check the legitimacy of applications/applicants, ensure that prospective licence holders are fully aware of their responsibilities to prevent child exploitation and that the operation of the business will enable licence holders to discharge this responsibility effectively.
- Where premises licenses are issued, there is further proactive engagement with designated premises supervisors (DPS) to ensure they also understand their responsibilities and their licence conditions.
- Out of hours spot checks during the evening and night-time economy on taxis/private hire drivers and vehicles and licensed premises, are undertaken together with collaboration with West Mercia Police to undertake daytime roadside enforcement operations that target taxis and private hire vehicles. Weekly tasking, involving a range of regulatory functions, is also undertaken; this provides an opportunity to raise and collate concerns that are impacting across regulatory teams and to task actions to the most appropriate team accordingly. It has led to multi-agency collaboration to tackle specific problematic premises where there are child exploitation concerns.
- The Council's Street Trading Policy 2018 – 2023, which introduced measures (e.g., requiring proof of identity, basic criminal record disclosure, further checks with the police, other local authorities and organisations) to reduce harm and exploitation in relation to children and young people, was revised and considered by the Strategic Licensing Committee in December 2022.

2.2. Exploitation –the gaps in service

- As highlighted at the People's Overview Committee (16th Nov 2022) there is a gap in therapeutic support for young people who have been abused through exploitation. Where these gaps exist the Local Authority commission bespoke services/packages of support, this support is wholly funded by the Local Authority.
- Gap in health attendance at exploitation strategy meetings has recently been resolved (school nurses are now in attendance).
- Gap in health participation at monthly Child Exploitation Panel Meetings – we are working towards a solution for this with MPFT.

2.3. Focus for 2023 / 2024

- Exploitation Conference hosted jointly by Children's Services and the PCC & West Mercia Police.
- Developing a multi-agency Exploitation Strategy

2.4. Summary of current resources

- The Branch Project – commissioned by the Police Crime Commissioner
- The Climb Project – commissioned by the Police Crime Commissioner
- TREES team – consisting of :

1 x Operational Lead
1 x Senior Social Worker
3 x Family Support Workers
1 x co-ordinator
1 x young person's substance and alcohol worker
1 x admin support

Financial cost to the Local Authority is approx. £329,012 (per annum) with a contribution from Public Health of £143,343 per annum

- West Mercia Police have established a Child Exploitation Team, consisting of:

1 x Detective Sergeant.
5 x budgeted Detective Constable posts of which four are filled.
1 x co-ordinator post which is filled.

(Financial cost to West Mercia Police is unavailable at this time)

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Implementation of a pathway for addressing the trauma experienced as a result of exploitation, this would need to be in collaboration with the ICS. Aim is to ensure direct access from TREES to specialist trauma support relating to exploitation.
- 3.2. Implementation of transition pathway for young people who continue to be exploited at the point of turning 18 years old. Working with Adult Services in Health and Scoil Care, the voluntary sector and the police.

- 3.3. A safeguarding report is due to be published which will include the voice of the child, learning needs to be taken from the review and recommendations implemented as appropriate.
- 3.4. Implementation of a 5 year partnership strategy re: exploitation. There needs to be a continued commitment to the response to exploitation across the partnership; including the funding of staff and direct support to young people – so that the TREES Team delivers a truly multi-disciplinary response to the needs of children and young people. Working with Education Access to ensure that schools can be supported to keep children in school and avoid permanent exclusion.
- 3.5. Further community awareness events following the success of the events held in Shifnal, Oswestry and more recently Ellesmere.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

- 4.1. Without therapeutic services designed and directed specially towards young people who have been abused through exploitation there is a potential lifelong impact including:
 - 4.1.1. Impact on mental health both as young people and into adulthood with possibly greater cost to services overall.
 - 4.1.2. Increased risks of criminality and impact on associated services.
 - 4.1.3. Increased risk of cycle of harm this may manifest when young people transition into adulthood and have children of their own, possibly requiring safeguarding and support services.
 - 4.1.4. Increased risk of unemployment – as a result of exclusions from school and NEET, lack of opportunities arising due to criminal offending.
 - 4.1.5. Increased risks of family breakdown, leading to children requiring LA accommodation and increased risks of homelessness.
 - 4.1.6. Increased risk of substance abuse both as young people and into adulthood and impact on support services to address this.
- 4.2. Gaps in multi-agency participation include:
 - 4.2.1. Limited opportunities for information sharing and multi-agency risk assessments.
 - 4.2.2. Limited opportunities to implement early help and support that may mitigate some of the escalating risks which then require more robust and costly interventions (i.e. a child coming into care).

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. An example of the Local Authority commissioning therapeutic support for a young person and family.

- 5.2. Child A – open to Children Social Care since April 2018, risks very quickly escalated in the months up to June 2022 where it became known that Child A was being criminally exploited. He was linked to a number of associates where exploitation was a feature, he was permanently excluded from school for possession of cannabis and information on social media indicated he was coerced into the supply of cannabis and cocaine, Child A was accessing the train line in order to do this cross county and over the border.
- 5.3. Child A had a number of episodes of going missing from home.
- 5.4. The Local Authority initiated care proceedings and Child A was placed into secure accommodation at a cost of £8,120.00 per week – annual cost of £423,400.
- 5.5. Stepping Stones and TREES team have been effective in supporting this young person to exit secure and return home. This is extraordinary practice as usually a young person goes from secure to high cost residential. Working with the family to formulate a creative plan of support The judge prasiad the Local Authority for listening to the family and young person, developing a package that supported their specific needs and funded the therapeutic support to all the family.
- 5.6. Requirement for therapeutic input with both Child A and the family costing the Local Authority £95 per session – likely to be a cost over time of several thousand pounds as the specialist service is not available in a timescale that would meet the needs of the family or of the court care plan.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. Energy and fuel consumption – managing children to remain close to home reducing the use of transport to visits from family and professionals.
- 6.2. Renewable energy generation – no effect
- 6.3. Carbon offsetting or mitigation – no effect
- 6.4. Climate change adaptation – no effect

7. Background

Included above.

8. Additional Information

No additional information

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The briefing session to committee aims to give assurance to members about the response from Children’s Social Care, Early Help, Education, Licensing on behalf of the council to address Exploitation in Children.
- 9.2. They both also aim to provide evidence of assurance as to the partnership contribution, as the response requires a multi-agency, co-ordinated response.
- 9.3. Gives assurance that each agency understands what they need to do to address the recommendations relevant to them, from the Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse Report 2022.

- 9.4. That the SSCP provides ongoing scrutiny, oversight and holding to account of partner agencies and ensures the ongoing development of policy, procedure and practice in addressing the risks and needs of young people experiencing exploitation.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Telford Sexual Abuse Enquiry

Its Hard to Leave – National Panel Report into Child Exploitation.

TREES exploitation Pathway SSCP

Local Member: *Kirstie Hurst-Knight*

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

None