

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COUNCIL IN RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND COUNTY LINES /GANG EXPLOITATION

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **20th March 2019**

From: **Name: Jenny Goodes
Title: Head of Service Integrated Front Door**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Purpose: **The Children and Young People Committee requested that these issues be followed up by the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee at its meeting on 13 November 2018.**

Recommendation: **The Sub-Committee is recommended to note and comment on the report.**

| <i>Officer contact:</i> | <i>Member contact:</i> |
|---|---|
| Name: Jenny Goodes | Names: Councillor Lis Every |
| Post: Head of Service | Role: Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee |
| Email: Jenny.goodes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk | Email: Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk |
| Tel: 01480 379794 | Tel: (office) 01223 706398 |

Summary:

- The Local Authority has a system in place to co-ordinate the information about those children and young people who are at risk of being exploited
- There are multi agency meetings that provide opportunities to review the intelligence around the exploitation picture in Cambridgeshire and to take action to reduce risks for individual and groups of young people at risk of/being exploited
- There is a dedicated police team working with young people to enable them to make statements about what is happening and to ensure that appropriate action is taken.
- There is a dedicated team, the Missing Exploited Trafficked Hub (MET Hub), within the Local Authority to undertake Return Home Interviews and to co-ordinate information on those children and young people who are at risk of exploitation
- Mapping exercises are well used to co-ordinate local information on risk areas/offenders to disrupt activity and reduce risks
- Work is ongoing with hotels/the night economy and transport agencies to increase awareness of child exploitation and to ensure that they are responding appropriately to situation where they suspect that this may be happening
- There is a proactive response to securing any available funding to support work around exploitation

1. BACKGROUND

1.1

Within Cambridgeshire, we are aware that some exploitation of children and young people is taking place. There is evidence that small numbers of young people are involved in county lines and are drug running significant amounts of Class A drugs both within the county and to neighbouring counties. There is evidence that some of these young people are being sexually exploited as a way of controlling them both within county lines, criminal exploitation cases and gang related crime. We know that a small number of our young people are experiencing high levels of violence and assault and that the threats made are often carried out as a means of warning, punishment and to maintain control. Their families can feel powerless to challenge and protect their children, and occasionally may be threatened and harmed if they try. Sexual exploitation of some young people is occurring as part of gang membership acceptance rituals, as a result of criminal exploitation and by adult males who target underage females grooming them, supplying alcohol/drugs and then exploiting them sexually.

Criminal exploitation creates a particularly demanding context, and police acknowledge nationally that the investigation of these crimes and targeting of

offenders is extremely challenging. This is in part due to the speed at which the perpetrators work and change locations, the fact that victims do not often recognise themselves as victims, or when they do they are in fear of violence to them or family members if they withdraw from the behaviour / speak to the police.

1.2

Local Context

The Local Authority is working hard with other professionals to understand, respond to and reduce the risks to children in Cambridgeshire from all forms of exploitation. There is a clear multi agency structure in place to do this with a strategic group that has responsibility for the exploitation action plan.

Included in the action plan are the following:

- Work with key sectors of the night time economy (licensed premises / door staff / taxi drivers) to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and county line exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking.
- Work with hotels across the county to raise awareness of CSE and county line exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking.
- Work with key partners in the transport industry (bus companies / train companies / British Transport police) to raise awareness of CSE and county line exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking.
- Implement and use the national CSE disruption tool kit
- Use the National referral Mechanism (NRM) process for ALL children who have been trafficked for exploitation purposes.

Underneath this sits the operational MACE (Missing and Child Exploitation) meeting. The monthly MACE meeting is a multi- agency forum that reviews and updates on any emerging or significant concerns about individual children, groups of children or areas that are giving cause for concern in respect of possible exploitation taking place. A themes and trends report is produced by the MET HUB and individual children are discussed to ensure that there are appropriate safety plans in place and that any appropriate disruption action has been taken.

The police present a report which identifies the children most at risk of exploitation (initially this was solely focussed on CSE but has been widened to cover criminal exploitation), any alleged perpetrators that are coming to their attention and any “hot spots” in the county where there is intelligence to suggest that sexual or criminal exploitation is taking place. The report is produced as a result of the collation of information gathered from Return Home Interviews, police intelligence and information received from all professionals who work with children in Cambridgeshire. This is achieved through a monthly multi agency Operation Makesafe cohort setting meeting which is chaired by the police to set actions around disruption and risk reduction.

Mapping meetings are used to investigate exploitation issues affecting a specific district or area highlighted at the Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting or emerging themes and trends identified by District Leads/MET hub. The multi-agency group looks at available information and intelligence and formulates an appropriate response plan specifically to tackle emerging issues of gangs and county lines, on behalf of the Chair. Updates on progress are reported back to the MACE meeting.

The mapping has been seen as best practice at Local Government Association level with numerous presentations being given to peers and regional colleagues, but would benefit from dedicated pathways of intervention forming part of the overall plan.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The MET Hub (Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Hub) is co-located with the CSE MET Police Team and has responsibility for undertaking Return Home interviews on children who go missing either from home or from care. These interviews should be held within 72 hours of a child being found and are undertaken by MET Hub workers. All information obtained is reviewed and key information is presented in a monthly report to the MACE meeting. There is clear evidence that going missing can increase vulnerability to being exploited and frequent missing episodes can be an indicator that a child is a victim of exploitation.

The following chart shows the performance over the last 6 months in respect of Return Home Interviews:

| | August | September | October | November | December | January |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| CCC Episodes | 99 | 74 | 85 | 96 | 75 | 109 |
| CCC RHI Completed | 98 | 72 | 74 | 85 | 66 | 95 (87%) |
| CCC Not Completed | 1 | 2 | 11 | 11 | 9 | 14 (13%) |
| Within 72 hours | 53(54 %) | 39(53 %) | 40(47 %) | 53(55 %) | 37(56 %) | 68 (62%) |
| Within 72 hours of MET notification | 75(76 %) | 60(81 %) | 64(75 %) | 73(76 %) | 22(34 %) | 21 (19%) |

Within Cambridgeshire currently, there are a number of drug operations that may be exploiting children and young people. It is difficult to provide data on this as the picture is ever changing but latest police information advises that there are 25 actively being investigated.

The MET Hub collates all information on children and young people who are identified within Cambridgeshire as being at risk of exploitation or of actually being exploited.

Any child who is deemed to be at risk has an exploitation risk assessment completed and this enables us through analysis of all available information and intelligence to establish whether the child is at emerging, moderate or significant risk of exploitation and whether the risk comes from sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, or gang related exploitation.

At the time of writing this report within Cambridgeshire there were 196 children on the exploitation tracker. These children will have had a completed risk assessment and have been identified as at some risk of Child Sexual Exploitation CSE (158) /Criminal Exploitation CCE (64) or in some cases both.

The Exploitation Risk Assessment categorises whether a child is assessed as being at Significant, moderate or emerging risk which then informs the level of intervention required.

| LEVEL | Emerging | Moderate | Significant |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| CSE | 78 | 65 | 15 |
| CCE | 20 | 35 | 9 |

Some of the children and young people who are vulnerable to criminal exploitation or who are being criminally exploited/exploited by gangs or involved in county lines are known to the Youth Offending Service.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) run Risk Management Panels which are multi agency in make up to ensure that high risk cases are well tracked and managed. At the lower end of the scale there is the offer of a preventative programme of intervention to children called “Which Way” which is delivered in YOS, the Early Help District Teams and the newly formed Adolescent Teams to support children and young people to move away from gang affiliations and criminal behaviour.

Various funding bid applications have been made such as Trusted Relationships and Early Intervention Fund which were unfortunately unsuccessful, but YOS are currently preparing a Youth Endowment Fund Bid which would enable the service to develop services to meet identified need for particular cohorts of children most at risk.

Funding for a post in Huntingdon through the Freeman Society has been secured. This worker will work alongside YOS, Early Help, Social Care and the MET Hub to engage young people who are at moderate or significant risk of exploitation to offer intensive support to young people, undertake safety checks and ensure that there is effective risk planning in place. This worker will also work with schools around prevention and support where there are young people identified as at emerging risk of exploitation.

Recognising the challenge of engaging with children and young people who are potentially immersed in county lines/ criminal exploitation/gang violence, the service is trying to develop a more responsive approach to include daily safe and well

checks for those at significant and moderate risk, and to develop with education more activity based timetables to reduce time available and offer a more positive alternative.

With our moderate and substantive cases, the biggest challenges are disclosure; managing engagement and disengagement; managing the balance of victim and perpetrator; diverting them into positive education and employment; responding to missing episodes; and conducting safe and well checks both during the day and out of hours. Further work needs to be undertaken to look at whether a voluntary involvement for this group of young people with an intensive diversionary timetable, daily contact and out of hours contact would offer improved outcomes in terms of diversion from exploitation and engagement with employment and/or education.

In April 2018 a new Police team was formed, also called the Missing Exploited Trafficked Hub that works jointly alongside the social care MET Hub team. This team contains 5 police officers, a police sergeant and other members of staff. They work closely alongside social care to share information to enable children to be engaged with and risks reduced / managed. The officers within the team are specialists and are plain clothes officers. They will often make contact with children after receiving intelligence or concerns from other agencies to provide a child and the family with knowledge around exploitation and what we (police) and other agencies can do to support them.

Appropriate legislation is used to disrupt exploitation of children and a number of CAWNs (Child Abduction Warning Notice) have been issued to alleged perpetrators to prevent them having contact or harbouring a minor.

Cambridgeshire Police also chair regular meetings with Care Home / Supported Living providers to discuss missing/exploitation and make them aware of any local concerns that they need to know about in order to assist them in looking after children within their care.

Unaccompanied young people are identified as being at particular risk of exploitation and trafficking. From April 2019 the police are introducing a new welfare procedure which will see greater joined up working with Immigration and capturing of intelligence when these children are first found.

Cambridgeshire police also run mystery shopper exercises across the year which involves plain clothes officers visiting hotels and behaving as if they were "exploiting" children. This is to see / check if the hotel staff response is appropriate. The findings of these checks are passed to local council licensing teams in order that they can consider whether licences should be renewed/revoked.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) have a dedicated officer with responsibility for exploitation who co-ordinates all awareness raising activity with businesses such as hotels and with night time economy providers such as taxi companies. Outreach work is undertaken with schools and programmes such as Chelsea's Choice have been funded to raise awareness of sexual exploitation. A number of other on line resources such as "Sic Party" have been used by schools to reinforce this message.

The Early Help district teams are actively involved in working with young people and their families to intervene when there are emerging risks so that risk of harm is reduced. Family workers and Young Peoples Worker complete the exploitation risk assessment and management tool alongside the young person and send this to the Missing and Exploitation Team (MET) Hub for inclusion on the MACE tracker. Early Help and internal partners within the district teams review the tracker monthly and any assessments are updated as needed and sent to the MET Hub.

Early Help contribute to any district based exploitation/County Lines mapping meetings regarding identifying young people, cohorts and connections in local areas.

In Cambridgeshire each Community Safety Partnership operates a multi-agency Problem Solving Group where incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour are reported, identified and problem solved as a partnership. These groups include councils, schools, housing providers, police, youth offending and support agencies. Early Help attend and contribute to these meetings to support identification of and interventions for young people at risk.

Previously in Huntingdonshire a project called Transforming Lives was funded by the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership via the Police and Crime Commissioner after areas of concern were identified in both St Ives and St Neots via the local Problem Solving Groups of young people at risk of exploitation. In St Neots this was regarding risk of criminal exploitation and anti-social behaviour of a group of young males and in St Ives and Huntingdon a group of young woman who were at risk of CSE.

Feedback from young people who attended was very positive. Here are some examples of what they said:

- “The project has been amazing. It has changed my life. Before I did not know all of the bad things which could happen to me with some of the things I was doing .It has helped me make better decisions”
- “A couple of weeks ago two of my friends went off with a man and spent the night with him. They took drugs and one of them had sex with him. They invited me to go with them but I said no because this project has given me the strength to say no”
- “It has helped me think about what I want to do. Before the project I wasn’t in school. I’m not back in full time but I have started going again and I want to achieve things in the future”
- “I didn’t have lot of time for the police, they always seen to be telling you off or getting you into trouble. I’ve got to know Rachel (PCSO) and would trust her in the future”

Alongside the work of the Early Help district teams we refer young people to Link to Change for ongoing intervention and support when they have experienced child

sexual exploitation. This voluntary agency also offers outreach and support sessions to schools.

3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Resource Implications

N/A

3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

N/A

3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

N/A

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

N/A

3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

N/A

3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

N/A

3.7 Public Health Implications

N/A

| Source Documents | Location |
|---|---|
| Reports and minutes of the Children and Young People Committee 13 November 2019 | https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/832/Committee/4/Default.aspx |