

LEICESTERSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY BOARD

14TH JUNE 2019

LSCSB UPDATE: CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION AND MISSING AND MODERN SLAVERY

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the board with an overview of the work and progress to date of the Child Criminal Exploitation, Missing and Modern Slavery Team based within the multi-agency Vulnerability hub.

Background

2. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) remains a strategic priority for the County. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) CSE, Missing and Trafficking Strategy and subsequent action plan was launched in 2013, and is driven by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) CSE, Missing and Trafficking Operations Group, which continues to build on established strengths to ensure an effective multi-agency response in respect of government recommendations "to combat the national threat of CSE and respond to the local prominence of incidents of CSE and Missing children and young people."
3. The Child Criminal Exploitation Operations Group meets monthly and reports to the Vulnerability Executive Board. The group includes, Assistant Directors, Heads of service and strategic leads in the police, Children's Social Care, Youth Offending Service, Targeted Youth Support Service, Early Help and Education. Members of the Operations Group will oversee the implementation of an LLR Partnership Strategy and Delivery Plan to combat and prevent the criminal exploitation of children. The Vulnerability Executive Board are at Director and Deputy Chief Constable level. Assistant Directors attend to provide feedback on the work of the Operations group.
4. Leicestershire County Council Social Care staff became co-located with the Police in September 2014. Leicestershire Police had already brought together several safeguarding functions within the force to consolidate its response to CSE and Missing Children. Due to the subsequent growth of the multi-agency team it relocated to South Wigston Police Station, which also houses the Child Abuse Investigation Unit. Due to the successful collaboration of partners; Leicestershire County Council Social Care staff are also represented within the unit replicating the enhanced response to CSE and Missing for cases of Domestic Abuse. The Out of Hour's Service provided by Leicestershire County Council has also successfully integrated into the hub. This approach provides an environment that encourages collaborative information sharing and

combined risk assessment, resulting in live time activity currently led jointly by Social Care and the Police.

5. The CSE and Missing team received funding from a growth bid in June 2015 which enabled the appointment of a CSE Co-ordinator. In October 2015, funding from a joint LSCB partnership bid was secured from the LLR Strategic Partnership Development Fund (SPDF) which was led by the County Council on behalf of the partnership.
6. This boost in funding enabled the development of 13 work streams, focusing on the identification and prevalence of CSE, raising both professional and public awareness of CSE, safeguarding children from further harm and supporting the police in the pursuit and prosecution of CSE perpetrators. Continuous multiple campaigns have included the CEASE campaign and the commissioning of the film Kayleigh Haywood's Love Story. The most recent campaign and film production, Breck's Last Game, is targeted at raising awareness of online grooming and is specifically targeted at boys (age 14-18yrs). In January this year the hub was recently showcased on the BBC's Inside Out programme around the threat to Boys Online.

Past Year

7. The SPDF project concluded in March 2018. As host to the project the County Council has provided further opportunities of redeployment for the staff involved.
8. The remaining components supported by the SPDF project are as follows:
 - The CSE Police Analyst continues to interrogate and analyse the combined partnership data to assist strategic leads targeting resources and tactically responding to the prevention of CSE. The analyst also supports the development of intelligence on live investigations through mapping of associations and locations and the profiling of victims and perpetrators of CSE.
 - The specialist CSE nurse maintains an electronic flagging system on children's health records for those at high risk of CSE. This helps to raise awareness around referrals and provide consultation with health and social care colleagues. It also identifies and refers children to support and recovery services.
 - The CSE Service Manager supports the development and delivery of key priorities of the CSE, Missing & Trafficked Action Plan, and is jointly responsible, alongside the Detective Inspector, for the effective deployment of partnership staff to respond to CSE investigations and maintains operational oversight of the day to day business of the hub.

9. The CSE Hub also benefits from an LLR CSE Communications Officer who delivers a joint communications strategy keeping both CSE and all forms of Child Exploitation in the public domain.
10. Leicestershire County Council's vision and commitment is to continue to develop a coordinated partnership response and child centred service to identify and disrupt the exploitation of children. The Hub has continued to expand, and now includes social care staff from Leicester City Council and representation from Rutland County Council. The initial concept was the full amalgamation of the three local authorities, but the decision was taken that, operationally, Leicester City and Rutland were not able to match Leicestershire County Council's offer of a permanent team of operational staff. As a result, the County and City teams remain co-located with health and the police; this continues to create opportunities for cross border information sharing and joint targeted work when children develop associations in the city and vice versa. The Hub has recently hosted a full day training event for 200 delegates from the police, education, health, probation, housing, licensing, youth offending teams, sexual assault referral centre and voluntary organisations.
11. A strong relationship with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) continues and the CSE Team has provided support to an interactive youth summit, which created an opportunity to hear the child's voice around issues including youth violence, knife crime, drug and alcohol abuse and CSE. Safeguarding advice and consultation will also be provided at the Small Business Summit to be held later this year.

Coming Year

12. The multi-agency approach to understand and respond to children who are at risk of CSE and those that go missing from home, care or education continues to disrupt, investigate and respond to the circumstances that cause children to be vulnerable to abusive situations. This critical area of safeguarding needs specialist knowledge and partnership collaboration from first disclosure through a complex judicial process and access to post abuse therapeutic help.
13. Leicestershire County Council has established and recruited to a second Service Manager post within the First Response team, with a portfolio that includes the operational responsibility for CCE and Missing and consolidates this with a successful Domestic Abuse pilot co- located within the hub. The post also has line management responsibility for the Out of Hours Service, also co-located at the Hub, offering the additional resource of a dedicated phone line to respond to missing children. This post will help to strengthen an integrated front door and continue the partnership approach to tackle all forms of Child Exploitation, led by the First Response service, so providing an effective proportionate response to all forms of child criminal exploitation,

including youth violence, exposure to drug and county line activity and sexual abuse. A whole family victim centred approach will be developed, along with a pathway to services to respond to any reported cases of Child Criminal Exploitation. Criminal exploitation is now becoming a priority for the CSE hub.

14. The funding from the OPCC funded Service Manager post has been utilised to appoint a LLR Strategic Child Criminal Exploitation Lead. Their role will be to work across the LLR partnership to assist in the delivery of the LLR Partnership Strategy & Delivery Plan.
15. Criminal activity, county lines and groups and gangs are becoming a feature, particularly for the children who are regularly missing. County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in the importing and exporting of illegal drugs in the UK. The county line refers to a dedicated mobile telephone number to order drugs and direct distribution. The exploitation of children and vulnerable adults to move, store, and circulate drugs is its mainstay.

Key issues for partnership working or affecting partners Notable developments and challenges:

16. All partnership agencies have a collective responsibility to tackle serious violence. Community Safety Partnerships are key in the prevention of serious crime and violence. A public health approach to strengthen the statutory safeguarding duty of teachers, health professionals, both youth and social workers and the police is essential. Training to develop innovative solutions to spot the signs of grooming, coercion, whole family isolation, intimidation and debt bondage to Organised Crime Groups needs to be established. Implications for mental health are profound, anxiety disorders, antisocial personality disorder; self-harm including suicide attempts are not uncommon. Clear pathways into services for our vulnerable children should create opportunities for multi-agency intervention strategies to steer children away from county lines and other criminal activity.

Issues in local areas

17. Criminal exploitation interlinks with several multiple vulnerabilities and offences including exposure to physical and emotional violence; neglect and sexual abuse. In every area of the Country vulnerable children are being recruited into county lines activity.
18. According to the National Crime Agency there are 5,866 mapped Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) groups in the UK with an estimated membership of 39,414 young people.

19. There are currently five confirmed county lines which are either active or have been active in Leicestershire in the past six months. County lines work in both directions with drugs coming into and leaving the LLR area with confirmed links to the West Midlands, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and London. Nationally, methods of transportation vary, however rail networks and hire cars are extensively used. In Leicestershire the market towns of Loughborough, Hinkley, Market Harborough and Coalville have been affected
20. Over fifty children (age 13-18 years) in Charnwood have been identified as being involved in drug manufacturing, distribution, CSE and associated criminal activity.
21. Operation Lionheart a five-week police investigation supported by the partnership has resulted in the execution of 132 warrants, 94 arrests and 82 people charged with significant drug offences. This has also created opportunities to identify vulnerable victims and witnesses requiring safeguarding plans because of being targeted in their local communities. This has been part of the nationwide operation resulting in 600 arrests coordinated by the National County Lines Coordination Centre; taking place within the month of May.
22. We are in the process of developing both a regional and local response to strengthen the multi-agency early intervention strategies and pathways to support services to steer children away from County lines, gangs, knife and gun crime.

Recommendations for the Board

23. That the Board note the contents of the report;
24. That Board members promote and raise awareness of the work of Children & Families Services to combat Child Criminal Exploitation.

Officer to contact

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