



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 3 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**LEICESTERSHIRE'S RESPONSE TO TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION (SIX MONTH UPDATE)**

**REPORT OF THE
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the work and progress of the Child Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Trafficked Hub.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) remains a strategic priority for Leicestershire. 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 Operations Group reports to the Vulnerability Executive Board, a sub group of the Strategic Partnership Board. Members of the Operations Group are at Assistant Director, Head of Service and Strategic levels. Members of the Executive Board are at Director and Deputy Chief Constable Level.

Background

4. Leicestershire County Council Social Care staff became co-located with Leicestershire Police in September 2014. A number of safeguarding functions had already been brought together within the Police 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.
5. Leicestershire County Council Social Care staff are represented within the unit replicating the enhanced response to CSE and Missing for cases of Domestic Abuse. 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.

6. Work to tackle CSE across LLR continues and is supported by specific posts 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 the 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.
 - In April 2019, a Social Worker already located at the Hub became seconded to the post of Missing & Safeguarding Coordinator. This LLR post is funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and is situated within the Missing from Home Police Team. The Coordinator's role is to establish professional links with Children's Homes and other providers to strengthen their response to supporting children who are vulnerable to all forms of child exploitation. Partnership guidance has been developed with Leicestershire Police to advise of the providers' responsibility to notify the local authority of children coming into their care. It also provides guidance for the completion of referrals and reporting missing children.
7. The multi-agency approach to understanding and responding to children who are at risk of CSE and those who go missing from home, care or education continues to investigate, prevent and respond to the circumstances that cause children to be exploited and be exposed to abusive situations. This critical area of safeguarding needs specialist knowledge and partnership collaboration to support a child and their family from the first disclosure and through the investigation, judicial process and recovery.

Performance and Activity: Quarter 4 2018/19

8. A range of data is collected on behalf of the multi-agency CSE team on a quarterly basis and analysed by Leicestershire County Council's Business Intelligence Service. The themes covered are CSE referrals, the profiling of both victims and perpetrators of CSE, and the identification and monitoring of the response to children who are missing from Home.
9. The service has been successful in the prevention, identification and pursuit of perpetrators of CSE. The number of adults/peers identified varies significantly on a quarterly basis, but over the last two years, a total of 181 perpetrators

have been identified across LLR. As might be expected, a proportion of the risky people identified by Leicestershire services were resident in Leicester city and vice versa. This is particularly relevant for criminal exploitation.

10. Leicestershire County and Leicester City, supported by the police analyst, are completing joint mapping association charts to identify association, premises and opportunities to disrupt the activity of children on the periphery of being associated with criminal activity. The gender profile over the past two years was 90% male, 7% female and 3% unknown gender(online). The main age profiles of offenders over the past two years across LLR was 45% aged 19-25, with a further 22% aged 25-39 across the three authorities. This pattern was similar in Leicester City and Leicestershire, both over the longer term and during quarter 4.
11. There has been a continued increase in the number of referrals during quarter 4, which suggests that the awareness raising and consultation around criminal exploitation and county lines activity is effective. The current number of referrals this quarter is 93, and the main age groups are 15-16 year olds followed by 13-14 year olds. This continues the long-term pattern. Whilst most referrals are for females, the long-term balance varies across the sub-region, with many more males referred in Leicestershire (30%) compared to Leicester City (19%). This is likely to be because of strong communication in the county between the CSE Team and the Youth Offending Team. Social Care remains the largest source of referrals, although over the last year, Leicestershire has received a consistently high proportion of referrals from the Youth Offending Service and Education.
12. There has been an increase in the number of CSE Risk Assessment Tools (RATs) that have been received, primarily due to the link that professionals are making with Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). 18 CSE RAT's were received alongside the Gang Association Tool (GAT).
13. In terms of the model of CSE, "online" activity remains the largest category followed by the "party model" (an environment such as a flat, park or recruiting ground, for children to socialise and have access to alcohol, drugs and tobacco. Sexualised behaviour between peers, or children and adults, is normalised; psychologically the child may believe they are consenting to abuse due to physical/emotional conditioning).
14. In quarter 4, 12 cases have been linked to the 'group model'. The 'group model' relates to a network of children linked by vulnerability, social activity, use of premises, are prevalent in respect of "Cuckooing" (taking over the premises of vulnerable adults for criminal purposes) or association to perpetrators. The identified group may not necessarily know each other but may be visiting the same properties. The mapping of friendships and associations (off and online) assist in the profiling of actual or potential victims susceptible to Child Exploitation. It also assists in the identification of children who unwittingly may be introducing their peers to all forms of CCE. The number may indicate low levels of facilitation and introduction by children already involved in visiting 'hot spots' such as particular flats, recruiting areas or premises.

15. Missing status refers to any child referral for Missing/CSE where they have been missing from home or care, out of their local authority area or education. Over the past three years, the numbers of reported missing episodes across LLR each quarter were broadly stable (an average per quarter of 297 in 2016/17 and 274 in 2017/18) until the end of 2017/18 when the average increased to 590 per quarter, representing an increase of 40%. This can partly be attributed to developments within the partnership reporting system and continuing to raise awareness around reporting missing children.
16. The number of missing episodes in Leicestershire attributed to non-Looked After Children (LAC) has followed a downward trend from 261 (133 individuals) in quarter 1 to 128 (92 individuals) in quarter 4. The number of episodes attributed to LAC was 85 during quarter 4 and has remained stable throughout the year.
17. The total number of children missing in quarter 4 was 43, the lowest result this year. The number of missing children (including episodes) in terms of Leicestershire children placed out of area has shown an upward trend.
18. Leicestershire has 41 independent care homes. For out of area (OOA) children there have been 100 episodes in quarter 4 – 78 episodes for 13 boys and 22 episodes for 12 girls. These children are supported by five different local authorities. The figures this year remain relatively stable. The OOA children may have safeguarding flags for CSE, CCE and involvement in county lines activity or may be susceptible to going missing from their home authority. The County Council's CSE team sit in on strategy discussions for these children and offer a local consultation alongside Leicestershire Police. On rare occasions the CSE team may offer a return interview completed by the duty CSE social worker. This is to try and influence the placing authority's information sharing and care planning whilst the child is in Leicestershire. The CSE Team, alongside the Missing from Home Team in the Police, and supported by the Safeguarding and Missing Coordinator, continues to contact other placing authorities to ensure they provide the full picture of the young person's experience and to identify risks and gaps that have made them vulnerable to significant harm outside their family experience.
19. In respect of the children who are repeatedly missing who are the responsibility of Leicestershire, consideration is always given to who is best placed to complete the return interview. This provides the opportunity to capture any information to devise safety and disruption plans for any future missing episodes.
20. The CSE hub continues to promote the "Looked After Children" pack for all providers. The pack offers a local directory of professional contacts, advice on the completion of referrals and statutory guidance and legislation. It also includes the expectation from Leicestershire of full compliance in the notification of the arrival of children in the area.

21. The Listening Support Service is a bespoke offer for the completion of independent return interviews for young people in the County who have been missing from home or care. The service operates from locality teams with return interviews being completed by Youth Workers. In addition, the Youth Workers also offer additional 1-2-1 sessions to address any concerns associated with risk taking activity and informal awareness raising. The facilitation of family meetings is often key to supporting the young person's issues relating to their missing episodes.

Developments

22. Leicestershire continues to embed CSE Champions across the workforce and strives to continuously improve its response whilst recognising that practitioners need to be trained consistently to identify and respond to Child Exploitation. The team works collaboratively with The Warning Zone, an interactive environment focussing on online grooming, radicalisation, criminal exploitation, knife crime and environmental hazards. It is estimated that during the last academic year 244 primary schools visited The Warning Zone, which equates to 10,250 children from across LLR.
23. Work is currently being undertaken on the development of a unique zone on Criminal Exploitation. This will include key safeguarding messages around CCE and emotional wellbeing and the introduction of age appropriate films and resources on CCE and county lines.
24. Leicestershire County Council has a second Service Manager in the First Response team, with a portfolio that includes the operational responsibility for CSE and Missing and a successful Domestic Abuse pilot co-located within the hub. The post also has line management responsibility for the Out of Hours Service.
25. A family victim centred approach will be developed, along with a pathway to services, to respond to any reported cases of CCE. This will ensure that there is a consistent approach to any child who has been exposed to significant harm through any form of CCE being viewed as a child in need of safeguarding first and foremost, rather than a victim or a suspect involved in a crime.
26. Leicestershire County Council, alongside Leicestershire Police, was selected to contribute to "The First Step" report, completed by the Children's Society and commissioned by the Home Office and Police. This research was commissioned to develop a national picture of return interview provision and identify good practice. It was recognised that there was a good shared understanding amongst the Police, Children's Social Care and the return interviewer's coordination through the partnership hub.
27. Key leads from the Vulnerabilities Operational Group had proposed that OPCC funding for CSE could be utilised to support a strategic response to Child Criminal Exploitation across LLR. This proposal was successful and a Detective Inspector, who has experience of working within the hub, is now collating data to inform a partnership action and delivery plan. The LLR Vulnerability

Operational Group will continue to develop operational pathways for the promotion of protection, prevention, provision, and partnership alliance and opportunities to pursue perpetrators of CCE.

Learning and Priorities

28. Criminal exploitation is now a priority for the CSE hub. Criminal activity, county lines, groups and gangs are becoming a significant 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. The term county lines is also used to describe situations where young people may be internally trafficked for the purposes of criminal exploitation. It is believed that children are being used as runners, cutting and bagging drugs, collecting debts and cuckooing premises. Young children are regarded as “clean skins” as they often haven’t come to the attention of the courts, receive lesser sentences and are easier to groom, isolate and manipulate and encourage into debt bondage.
29. There are currently five confirmed county lines which are either active or have been active within the last six months. County lines work in both directions, with drugs coming into and leaving the County, and there are confirmed links to Leicester City, West Midlands, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and London.
30. The indicators and vulnerabilities in respect of criminal exploitation are not dissimilar to identifying the signs of CSE, for example, missing from home, arrested in possession of drugs, carrying a weapon, unexplained injuries, additional phones, found in a cuckooed address, family conflict and not in education.
31. Leicestershire Police commenced Operation Lionheart in April 2019. The coordinated activity was conducted in conjunction with social care partners, facilitated by weekly briefings. The vulnerable children and adults identified during the enforcement were reviewed daily and full details shared with partners. This identified young people linked to drugs either through the geographical area or by associations. For example, one of the urban street gangs, the “LE11”, have been running and dealing for two separate lines, both originating from London and operational in the Charnwood area. It is unknown how they were originally groomed and recruited, however those identified are deemed vulnerable young people who were involved in some criminal activity prior to links to county line activity.
32. Leicestershire is formulating a Child Criminal Exploitation Framework to ensure a coordinated response to identifying risk and offering safety and support to those already at risk of harm. This legislative framework, alongside the CCE Regional Standards, will assist in identifying local supply and demand in relation to the drug dealing business model, promoting a regional overview to promote collaboration, and strengthening the County’s multi agency early

intervention strategies to steer children away from county lines, gangs and knife crime.

33. Safeguarding children is paramount and the primary question is whether the child is in danger, not whether they are a victim or a suspect in a crime. It is recognised that sharing intelligence with the police and partners may have consequences for the child and their families. Contextual safeguarding will be used to work with families and identify the vulnerable cohort for targeted prevention work. Work will take place with the Police to balance safeguarding and enforcement. This will be resource intensive in the coordination of partners to provide early intervention and time to develop trusted relationships to assist children in developing exit opportunities, or for criminal activity to reduce.

Conclusions

34. Leicestershire Children and Family Services has worked well with partners to raise the profile and tackle Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing, with the exploitation of children now being seen through a broader lense. CSE is now regarded in the wider context of child exploitation, which encompasses criminal exploitation, trafficking, modern slavery and sexual violence and abuse.
35. In recognition of the ongoing threat to children and vulnerable adults the success of the co-located multi agency CSE Team is evolving under the leadership of the Vulnerability Executive Group into the CCE Team. In addition, the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Team is now aligned alongside the CSE Team.

Background Papers

None

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

36. None

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

37. The CSE Hub is committed to equality and ensuring the human rights of all users and, in delivering the service, adheres to the Equality and Human Rights Act. The Hub receives quality and up to date data which is analysed to determine any areas that are underrepresented and may need a stronger focus.

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