



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 2 NOVEMBER 2021

LEICESTERSHIRE'S RESPONSE TO TACKLING CHILD CRIMINAL
EXPLOITATION

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 Criminal Exploitation, Missing and Modern Slavery Hub.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) remains a strategic priority for the County. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Missing and Trafficking Strategy and subsequent action plan was launched in 2013, and was driven by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) CSE, Missing and Trafficking Operations Group, which continued to build on established strengths to ensure an effective multi-agency response in respect of government recommendations "to combat the national threat of all forms of CCE and respond to the local prominence of incidents of CCE and Missing children and young people." As the understanding of the national threat of sexual and labour exploitation has been developed, other forms of criminal exploitation driven by drug gangs are recognised, including the county lines model of distribution, and selling illegal narcotics. The response is to continue to prioritise this form of child abuse.
3. In November 2019 Leicestershire County Council launched the Child Criminal Exploitation Framework 2019-2021. This has now been adopted as the East Midlands Child Criminal Exploitation framework. On 28 September 2021, the County Council learnt that it had have been successful in a regional application to the Department for Education Recovery fund. Leicestershire will lead the development of a Practice Framework to enable the partnership to develop strength-based practice to protect adolescents from harm outside the home. The County Council will also host a regional seminar to ensure dissemination of learning and good practice exchange across the nine regions.
4. The Child Criminal Exploitation Operations Group reports to the Vulnerability Executive Board, a subgroup 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

5. 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.
6. Leicestershire County Council Social Care staff are represented within the unit replicating the enhanced response to CCE and Missing for cases of Domestic Abuse. The County Council's Out of Hours service is also embedded within 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.
7. 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).
8. The SPDF project had concluded in March 2018 and the remaining components were supported by the Office of Police Crime Commissioner until March 2021 and the work was overseen by the CSE and Missing Operations Group.
9. In response to the withdrawal of resources by the Police, the County Council has continued to strategically prioritise this area of safeguarding:

LCC have continued to recognise the ongoing impact of all forms of exploitation and have successfully recruited a CCE Team that replicates the already established CSE offer. This team recognising the cross collaboration between CSC and Youth Justice and has also recruited youth workers to work alongside social workers this has created a dynamic of diverse experience and a flexible approach to build and invest in trusted professional relationships with our most vulnerable children.
10. The multi-agency hub has operated throughout the pandemic. Initially across the three authorities there was a drop in the number of reported missing children. As restrictions continued, non-frequent missing children emerged due to the impact of being restricted from seeing family members and friends. Regarding CSE, the party model reduced due to lack of environmental opportunity; however, opportunist sexual abuse instigated on social media platforms has continued to be an introduction to abuse.
11. The hidden harm of online grooming and recruitment remains active and the level of serious youth violence, including stabbings and aggravated street robbery, has increased.

12. There were significant convictions for some young adults, who were arrested during Operation Lionheart. This inevitably left gaps within the drugs manufacturing and distribution model, although intelligence suggests that younger family members have plugged these gaps. There has been an increase in the level of violence as some of the initial instigators have been released from custody. Contact continued with these young adults whilst in prison, and it was known that the network of communication from both remand centres and prisons facilitated the continuation of established County Lines. The service has continued to monitor and share information collaboratively with neighbourhood police, the Force Intelligence Bureau, community safety and the Youth Justice Team.
13. At the beginning of October 2021, Leicestershire Police began Operation Impose. 73 Warrants were executed; all the addresses were checked by the Children's Social Care Safeguarding Single Point of Contact for the County Council to identify any safeguarding and vulnerability needs. This not only at times identified the whereabouts of some individuals post enforcement but created opportunities for safeguarding and intervention work. The community drugs team, Turning Point provided outreach sessions and individual support and the exploitation team provided support to children and families who required support and intervention.
14. There is a strong indication that due to Operation Impose, 90% of all drug supply chains into the Hinkley area have been removed and twenty individuals were charged with significant drug offences. Three business premises were enforced against, and a licensing team created an opportunity to spot illicit enterprise in the night-time economy. The Police recognise that this enforcement activity will inevitably create a gap in the drugs supply chain and a further six-week plan is in place to develop the intelligence to try and prevent the market void being filled by waiting organised criminals.
15. On 11th October a 4'P intensification plan was deployed by Leicestershire Police and the hub alongside the Violence Reduction Network (VRN). The components are:
 - Prepare – to reduce the ongoing threat and impact
 - Prevent – disrupt and engage
 - Pursue – prosecution and conviction of perpetrators
 - Protect – increase the protection of the vulnerable and the local community.
16. Nationally the volume of supply from county lines across the UK suggests significant amounts of money are flowing from street demand back into the points of distribution via a variety of transactions including bank accounts. Rail and bus tickets, rental agreements, and apps including Deliveroo and Uber all become relevant in the identification of location and distribution links. Coordinated activity across the whole partnership, including Youth Justice, housing providers, education, inclusion, health care and the third sector, will assist in raising awareness.

17. Corporate Communications will raise awareness across Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram and will specifically target hot spot locations such as Coalville, Hinkley, Charnwood and Leicester East.
18. Education packs to enhance the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) curriculum will be distributed by the hub. These focus on strengthening knowledge and skills to keep children healthy, safe, and aware of exploitative adults and situations. Joint visits will also be undertaken by the “trusted” professional working with high-risk vulnerable children alongside a CCE detective from the hub to discuss concerns, capture their voice, increase protection, and disrupt engagement with criminality. The Youth Service, in conjunction with the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), will deliver a parent’s E POD, which will include the screening of “Are You Listening”. It is hoped that this will enhance public confidence, encourage the use of the community partnership portal, safeguard the vulnerable and increase public safety.

Performance and Activity: Quarter 4 2020/21

19. A range of data is collected on behalf of the multi-agency CCE team on a quarterly basis and analysed by Leicestershire County Council’s Business Intelligence Service. As more integrated approach to tackle CE and Missing has been developed during 2020/21, the service has jointly facilitated the expansion of reporting to include data on criminal exploitation, police, and community health data. This includes:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) referrals and outcomes
 - Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) referrals and outcomes
 - Risky Adults/peer profiles
 - Missing Children

Summary

20. The number of referrals received across LLR during Q4 was the lowest of the past six years. A review of the CSE risk ratings, however, suggests that the profile of cases during Q3 and Q4 is complex and therefore riskier than in previous quarters. This is also reflected in the referral outcomes. Sadly, due to the covert nature of the lockdown period, predatory perpetrators have taken advantage of isolation to abuse. During Q3 and Q4, a higher percentage of referrals were from BME backgrounds than the long-term average. Emotional health was more pronounced as a health concern, with COVID 19 restrictions also believed to have impacted on children’s mental health. In terms of the model of CSE there were no “party Model” cases in Leicestershire during quarter 4, which is usually the second largest model after “online.” However, there was a relatively high percentage of “boyfriend/girlfriend” cases.

Analysis of Data

CSE Referrals and Outcomes

21. The number of CSE referrals to the three local authorities in LLR was 71 during Q4 which is the lowest number of the past six years. In Leicestershire the number of referrals dropped from 48 to 38.
22. Risk assessment tools (RATs) were completed for all referrals across LLR during Q4. Over the past four years the highest category has been at risk; however, this has changed by offering early intervention opportunities in Q3 and Q4, and now medium risk is the largest category. This would suggest that the last two quarter's cases are of a higher risk nature than previously. This also appears to coincide with the lifting of restrictions, and it is assumed children are now being supported by universal services.

Children and Young People Profile

23. The age bands used for the data collection has been changed for 2020/21 to allow analysis linked to the age of criminal responsibility (age 10) and the age of majority (age 18). During Q4 the local authority data shows the age group with by far the largest number of young people was 14-15 years, reflecting the pattern during 2020/21.
24. Over the past four years, 71% of referrals have been female across LLR (1,271 of 1,792). Looking at ethnicity in Q4 in Leicestershire 16% are from BME backgrounds (6 of 38) which is more than double the long-term average of 7% for the County (72 of 1,016). The most common areas of residence in this quarter broadly follows long term patterns, namely Charnwood, North West Leicestershire and Hinkley and Bosworth.
25. The long-term referral data identifies "Emotional Health" as the largest category of health concerns and during Q4 this pattern was slightly more pronounced. This again could be due to enforced isolation and lack of universal face to face contact due to COVID 19.
26. The long-term data regarding residential status of those referred shows that 79% live at home (821 of 1,034). During Q4 a greater proportion of children were living at home (37 out of 38 referrals). Only 3 of the 38 were not known to services and relatively few were Looked After Children. However, 30 of the 38 cases were Child in Need or open to the Children and Family Wellbeing Service. This indicates a predisposition to vulnerability, and includes Domestic Abuse, family dysfunction, bereavement, and exclusion from education.
27. The disability status recorded suggests that over the long term, a significant percentage of CSE referrals have some form of disability (learning disability is the most commonly identified), with 23% of Leicestershire referrals having a disability over the long term (242 of 1,034 over the past four years). Also, a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD inattentive type ADHD) is now becoming more common. Liaison with CAMHS and access to the Adverse Childhood Experiences Project has been invaluable.
28. Looking at education status over the long term across LLR, 87% of children referred are on roll at a mainstream school or college (899 of 1,034 over the

past four years). It is known that many of the children supported are on alternative timetables and attend alternative provision. Over the long term many of those referred had been recorded as missing, with 44% of Leicestershire referrals having missing episodes (442 of 1,015 over the past four years). This again suggests that the most vulnerable children are exposed to CSE, with the high level of predictors including exclusion from school and missing from home.

Risky Adults or Peers Profile

29. The number of risky adults varies significantly on a quarterly basis. Over the past four years a total of 346 people were identified across LLR. An area of residence was identified for 298 of these individuals with the majority being resident outside LLR. In Q4, nine risky adults were identified in Leicestershire, of which eight were resident outside LLR.
30. This information would again suggest the opportunities that online grooming present to perpetrators. Over the past four years the gender profile shows that 89% are male (309 of 346). The ethnicity of risky adults varies across the three authorities as might be expected given their differing population profiles.

Child Criminal Exploitation

31. Looking at the rate of referrals over the past twelve months per 10,000 population, the rates are similar in the County and City. In Leicestershire there has been 145 referrals and during Q4 there were 36 referrals. An association map was completed for 10 out of the 36 referrals which suggests cross border links to different associates and locations.
32. In terms of gender, 90% are male (260 of 285) and the most common age group is 14-15 closely followed by 16-17 years. Over the past two years in Leicestershire 13% of referrals were from BME backgrounds (36 of 285). In Q4, 11 out of 36 referrals were from BME backgrounds.
33. Regarding area of residence, in Leicestershire over the longer term, Charnwood has generated the most referrals. During Q4, Charnwood had the highest number at ten closely followed by Oadby and Wigston with eight referrals, which is relatively high for a small population.
34. In terms of legal status, over the past two years over 80% of those referred were living with family (249 of 285), and this remained the case in Q4.
35. In terms of missing status over the past two years, 50% of Leicestershire referrals have this status (142 of 285), and during Q4 this pattern was maintained. In terms of Youth Justice involvement over the past two years 27% of children have this support (76 of 285).
36. In Leicestershire 1 out of 36 referrals in Q4 achieved National Referral Mechanism (NRM) status. This is the framework to identify potential victims of modern slavery to ensure they receive appropriate support.

Missing Children

Non-LAC

37. As expected, the number of missing children and missing episodes attributed to non-LAC children was relatively low during 2020/21 compared to the previous two years.

LAC

38. In Leicestershire the number of LAC missing was 49 in Q4. This is the lowest recorded in two years. The children involved were evenly split between County and out of area children. For Leicestershire LAC placed outside the County, 11 were reported missing (attributing to 30 episodes)

Missing Return Interviews

39. In Leicestershire during Q4, 168 missing interviews were completed, of which 74% (125) were completed in 72 hours.

Activity and updates

40. The hub works in full collaboration with the VRN to maximise the impact of the response to serious youth violence and this has created joint opportunities including the “Are You Listening” film and resources.
41. Five Contextual Safeguarding Champions from across LLR had been identified. The Champions are tasked with identifying key indicators and objectives to measure the impact of harm outside the home. The restructuring of the Youth Justice and Early Help offer has created not only alignment but joint triage of complex cases and an offer of coproduction of intervention and resources within the home, education, and local communities.
42. The County Council has a unique action plan but works within the parameters of the overall LLR priority areas
- Consultation with children and families
 - Develop a wider reach to underrepresented groups.
 - Corporate Communications lead impact and promotion.
 - Framework to enable collaboration of universal services and regional seminars.

Good News Stories

43. During the last year six children saw their perpetrators convicted and receive substantial sentences across LLR. For County children, successful criminal compensation claims have been made. This has created opportunities to play to the child’s strengths and fulfil their aspirations.
44. A CSE worker has been nominated for a Chief Constable Commendation alongside the CSE detective in relation to supporting a young autistic girl to tell her story.

45. Association mapping takes place on a regular basis which identifies the cross-border links, themes, and emerging groups of children. Partnership trigger plans are in place and operate across Out of Hours. This has resulted in the recovery and engagement of long term missing children.
46. Leicestershire, alongside the Youth Justice offer, has extended its remit during national intensification weeks and large County Lines Investigations. The Reception Centre is manned with both social workers and youth workers to debrief children and assist in the identification of victims, witnesses, and suspects.

Next Steps

1. Development of regional standards into KPI's.
2. Adoption of the 5P standards to formulate the action plan.
3. Areas of priority: Analysis of data to identify risk and drive outcomes.
4. Await the outcome /impact of the police missing review.
5. Development of the Protecting of Adolescents Framework: pathway.
6. Identification of a LLR Comm's coordinator.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

47. None

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

48. 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. As such, in 2018, the Hub has a targeted plan to respond to this by raising awareness of and supporting males who are experiencing CSE, as evidence suggests that they are less likely to seek help. Leicestershire partners will join with regional colleagues in this work.

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