

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 8 NOVEMBER 2022**

**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 been successful in a regional application to the Department for Education Recovery fund. The project entitled Harm Outside the Home started in January 2022 and concluded with a regional seminar in July 2022.
4. Nationally, the Department for Education (DfE) projects covered three key themes to safeguard children from extrafamilial harm: Parental engagement, Education as a protective factor and reachable moments.

5. Leicestershire has led on the development of a Practice Framework to enable the partnership to develop strength-based practice to protect adolescents from harm outside the home. Locally Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire were awarded the funding to represent the East Midlands Regional Partnership within this National Project Framework.
6. For Leicestershire County Council (LCC) the project focused on using relational based practice supported by a trauma informed approach. A group work offer, for four high risk missing children, was developed and this work was supported by the Vulnerability Hub and specialist services. Bedfordshire University also supported the service in respect of the Safer Young Lives Research Centre in the coordination of the project.
7. The other project sat in the First Response offer, scoping for indicators of increased vulnerability including exposure to exploitation, Edge of Care, and vulnerable homeless seventeen-year-olds. Donna Smalley continues to represent the Council as part of the consultation group to tackle child exploitation and the development of national practice principles to support the multi-agency response to all forms of exploitation. The full Harm Outside the Home project report is attached as an appendix to this report.
8. 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 and Head of Service and Strategic levels. Members of the Executive Board are at Director and Deputy Chief Constable Level.

Background

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. LCC has continued to recognise the impact on children and families of all forms of exploitation. There are two teams that respond to CSE and CCE and missing children. The recruitment of youth workers has strengthened the ability to reach out to the most vulnerable children. Collaboration with youth justice has strengthened both services understanding of criminal justice, compliance with orders and the exploration of civil orders to increase safety and protection.

12. The Multi-Agency Hub has continued to promote partnership collaboration between its locality social work teams and neighbourhood policing. Moving towards the recognition that contextual risk works in everyday contexts, demonstrating both protection and risk simultaneously. The need for police led, multi-agency problem solving groups, inclusive of neighbourhood police, locality teams representing families and community safety partnership. This collaborative approach is necessary to improve tools to identify those at risk currently, monitoring and risk reduction through early intervention and awareness raising. The vision to provide safer spaces in communities, work with education and the local youth work offer.
13. 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. The Council works collaboratively with the Violence Reduction Network to provide opportunities and access to Barnardo's Trauma informed training. The service now overlays its collective data to identify hot spots and particularly schools and alternative provision that may require support to identify those children who are vulnerable to exploitation.
14. The Vulnerability Hub continues to collaborate daily to identify those at risk. A fortnightly operational partnership review meeting considers all HIGH risk graded cases, to monitor the impact of intervention, the progression of police investigations and most importantly the outcomes for children; by creating safety within their families, neighbourhoods, and educational communities. The Council is represented by individual CCE Single Point of Contact (SPOC) at district level.
15. The Violence Reduction Network (VRN) dashboard is also informing local districts of potential problem profiling to support local action plans. The service has continued to promote and monitor information sharing collaboratively with neighbourhood police, the Force Intelligence Bureau, Community Safety Partnerships, and the Youth Justice Team.
16. Last year 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.
17. 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. The service continues to develop

multi agency training across LLR. Currently it is targeting education, working alongside colleagues from Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire to demonstrate the Harm outside the Home toolkit, the trauma informed tool kit and promote the use of the eastmidlandsexploitation micro site.

18. This website will be a one stop professional site hosted by the Council and supported by its Safeguarding Partnership Board. It will house the Harm outside the Home project findings, resources, blogs, and video's that support universal professionals' in working and responding to the context and factors that compromise the safety of young people in extra familial settings.
19. The vulnerability Hub is working in collaboration with the innovation programme and Barnardo's in the development of local specialist residential homes to accommodate and support the most vulnerable children. Barnardo's now attend monthly strategic planning meetings to identify any themes, places, or spaces where unwanted activity is taking place. This focuses on the drivers of harm identifying locations, individuals to target disruption activity.
20. As part of national intensification weeks to tackle county lines activity, the partnership offers a coordinated response, providing a reception centre for children who may be identified at targeted addresses. Staff are available in custody suites, to support, advocate and potentially utilise a reachable moment when a child may be open to intervention. CCE staff are also present when the police enforce if the service has information to suggest children may be present.
21. Education packs to enhance the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) curriculum are 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 are 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 promotion of the "Are You Listening" video, and the #LookCloser campaign are consistently promoted. 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 1 2022/23

22. 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. A 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:
 - i. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) referrals and outcomes
 - ii. Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) referrals and outcomes
 - iii. Risky Adults/peer profiles
 - iv. Missing Children

Summary

23. The number of CSE referrals received across LLR during Q1 continues to be low in the context of the past six years. This is consistent with regional neighbours and is also reflected nationally. Whilst the number of CCE local authority referrals dropped during Q1; the police received their highest quarterly number of CCE referrals since reporting began in April 2020. During 2021/22, the number of missing episodes reported to the police increased significantly compared to the previous year, while Q1 showed the highest number of reported missing episodes for the past six years.
24. This increase in missing is most likely post pandemic and seasonal, with the emphasis placed on the identification of children at risk of CCE. However, the County Council's Business Intelligence team are undertaking a review of the partnership data collection. In the County, it can be seen that for some of the female cohort they are being introduced to an exploitation model through CSE and then progressively groomed to be involved in criminal activity.

Analysis of Data

CSE Referrals and Outcomes

25. The number of CSE referrals to the three local authorities in LLR was 74 during Q1, an increase from the 65 reported in Q4. In Leicestershire the number of referrals was 40 not dissimilar to the 39 recorded in Q4.
26. Risk assessment tools (RATs) were completed for all referrals across LLR during Q1. Over the past four years the highest category has been at risk; however, this has changed by offering early intervention opportunities in Q4, and Q1 now medium risk is the largest category. Leicestershire continues to record a relatively high proportion of "at risk" referrals, these children being offered a six-week risk prevention pack, to offer the opportunity for early intervention.

Children and Young People Profile

27. 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). The local authority and police data shows that consistently across the past two years the largest number of young people was 14-15 years represented in all areas.
28. In Leicestershire, the second largest group was aged 12-13 years.
29. Over the past five years, 72% of referrals have been female across LLR. In Leicestershire in Q1, 33 of 40 referrals were female. Looking at ethnicity in Q1, only two of the 40 referrals were from BME backgrounds. The most common areas of residence in this quarter broadly follows long term patterns, namely Charnwood, North West Leicestershire and Hinkley and Bosworth.

30. The long-term referral data identifies “Emotional Health” as the largest category of health concerns and during Q1 this pattern was maintained, followed by substance misuse.
31. The long-term data regarding residential status of those referred shows that 71-76% of CSE referrals live at home. During Q1, seven out of 40 referrals were living in residential care. Ten out of the 40 were not known to services, which is unusually high, as long-term data suggests that very few of the referrals are not known to children’s services. 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, Edge of Care, family dysfunction, bereavement, and exclusion from education.
32. 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 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.
33. Looking at education status over the long term across LLR, 84% of children referred are on roll at a mainstream school or college 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 CCE, with the high level of predictors including exclusion from school and missing from home.
34. In Leicestershire, three of the 40 referrals were known to have an EHCP (Education health and Care Plan) while eleven children were registered with SEN support needs but without an EHCP.

Risky Adults or Peers Profile

35. The number of risky adults varies significantly on a quarterly basis. Over the past five years a total of 424 people were identified across LLR. An area of residence was identified for 361 of these individuals with the majority being resident outside LLR. In Q1, 12 risky adults were identified in Leicestershire, of which five were resident outside LLR.
36. 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

37. In Leicestershire there has been 50 referrals in Q1, lower than the 70 recorded in Q4. The police received 209 referrals during Q1, their highest quarterly total since recording started in April 2020.
38. Over the past three years the gender balance of referrals to the local authorities has been 94% male. In Q1 in Leicestershire 46 of 50 referrals were male and the most common age group is age 14-15, closely followed by 16-17 years.
39. Regarding area of residence, in Leicestershire over the longer term, Charnwood has generated the most referrals. During Q1, Charnwood had the highest number at ten, closely followed by Melton with nine referrals.
40. In terms of legal status, over the past three years over 80% of those referred were living with family, and this remained the case in Q1.
41. In terms of missing status over the past three years, 44% of Leicestershire referrals have this status, and during Q1 this pattern was maintained. In terms of Youth Justice involvement over the past three years 25% of children have this support. In Q1 22% had Youth justice involvement.
42. In Leicestershire seven out of 50 referrals in Q1 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

43. 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 three years. The downward trend has continued until Q4 2020/21. Q1 shows the highest missing across LLR for the past six years. In Leicestershire numbers returned to pre pandemic levels with 108 children reported missing in Q1.

LAC

44. In Leicestershire the number of LAC missing was 66 during Q1, very similar to Q4. Looking at the detail 28 of these children were Leicestershire LAC with (77 episodes) while 38 were from out of area (with 79 episodes).

Missing Return Interviews

45. In Leicestershire during Q1, 250 missing interviews were completed, of which 67% were completed in 72 hours.

Activity and updates

46. 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.

47. Five Contextual Safeguarding Champions from across LLR have 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.
48. The County Council has a unique action plan but works within the parameters of the overall LLR priority areas
 - i. Consultation with children and families
 - ii. Develop a wider reach to underrepresented groups.
 - iii. Corporate Communications lead impact and promotion.
 - iv. Framework to enable collaboration of universal services and regional seminars.

Good News Stories

49. During the last year, six children saw their perpetrators convicted and receive substantial sentences across LLR. For children in Leicestershire, successful criminal compensation claims have been made. This has created opportunities to play to the child's strengths and fulfil their aspirations.
50. 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. This young person has also shared her story at work force training events. On 21 October the perpetrator received a 20-year sentence for abduction and sexual offences committed against a child under thirteen years. It was abundantly clear that the length of sentence was reflective of this child having to give testimony.
51. Association mapping takes place on a regular basis which identifies the cross-border links, themes, and emerging groups of children.
52. 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.
53. A team manager has been nominated for a national social work award in relation to leading her team in partnership to tackle exploitation.

Next Steps

54. Implementation of the recommendations outlined from the Harm outside the Home Project.
55. Areas of priority: Analysis of data to identify risk and drive outcomes.
56. Multi agency training in relation to missing children and trauma informed practice.
57. Development of the Safeguarding Adolescents Framework: Community safety plans.

58. Work with Barnardo's to develop the internal residential offer.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

59. None

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

60. 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.

Appendix

Harm Outside the Home Project Learning Report.

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