

DECISION-MAKER:	CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
SUBJECT:	CHILD EXPLOITATION IN SOUTHAMPTON – INCLUDING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION
DATE OF DECISION:	23 JANUARY 2020
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CONTACT DETAILS

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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Attached to the report is a confidential appendix. The confidentiality of the appendix is based on Categories 1 and 7 of paragraph 10.4 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules. Category 1 relates to 'Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual', whilst Category 7 relates to 'Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.'

BRIEF SUMMARY

The Local Authority, Police, Health and other partner agencies have statutory responsibilities to identify and protect children from harm. Nationally, in recent years, there has been an increased recognition a focus on protecting children from the risks of criminal & sexual exploitation outside of their homes - 'Contextual Safeguarding'. In Southampton the Council works closely with the Hampshire Constabulary, Health, voluntary agencies and schools to understand the local exploitation problem profile and to coordinate the identification and protection of children at risk. This is steered strategically by the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton (HIPS) Child Exploitation Group and locally by the Missing, Exploited, Trafficked (MET) Operational Group.

Child Exploitation (Sexual & Criminal) – CSE / CCE

- Children coerced, manipulated, enticed or forced into engaging in sexual or criminal activity. CCE may involve stealing to order, hiding stolen goods, pick pocketing, being used to facilitate burglaries, carrying / selling drugs or weapons, money laundering.
- Power imbalance between the child and the perpetrator/s. Perpetrators can be individuals or group/gang. Perpetrators often gain from the situation either financially or in status (money, discharge of a debt, free/discounted goods or services, increased status, personal gratification).
- Sometimes children are offered or given something to get them to do these things – tangible or intangible (money, drugs, alcohol, status, protection, perceived love/affection, prevention of something negative happening to them/others). They may be coerced through threats/violence.
- Any child under the age of 18 – including 16 and 17 year olds.

- Involves differing degrees of abusive activities (threats, violence, coercion, intimidation, enticement, peer pressure, sexual bullying, cyber bullying, grooming).
- Child Exploitation occurs in different settings and contexts - online or face to face, in relationships with children or adults; individuals or groups or gangs, online/social media, hang out spots, parties, parks, hotels, homes, might be a one off or occur over a period of time.

County Lines

‘County Lines’ is a method of drug related criminal activity which involves criminal gangs setting up dealing operations in a place outside their operating area (crossing ‘county lines’) with the aid of dedicated mobile phone lines or ‘deal lines’. Often moving drugs from bigger cities e.g. London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham etc. to outside areas to make more money. Generally involves Class A drugs such as heroin, crack cocaine due to it being most lucrative. Likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons. Young people exploited in this way are also at risk of being trafficked – travel arranged or facilitated for the purposes of them being exploited.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	That the Panel understands child exploitation in relation to Southampton’s children, the multi-agency response and the city’s compliance to local procedures and national statute.
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REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	To enable the Panel to develop their understanding of the exploitation risks for Southampton children and the agencies response and the context of increased national focus on criminal and sexual exploitation.
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ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2.	None.
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DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

Southampton overview

3.	CSE risks appear to remain relatively steady, and within the last 12 – 18 months we have seen that the workforce are increasingly identifying CCE risks in addition to CSE and are alert to the presence of county lines activity in the area. County lines is an issue within Southampton, with multiple lines active at any one time. In addition to local children, children from other areas such as Birmingham, Kent, London have been located within the city in addresses linked to drug supply / found in possession of drugs, likely to have been criminally exploited and trafficked. Southampton children have also been found in other areas e.g. Croydon, Portsmouth with evidence this is linked to county lines. Currently Southampton have 21 children regarded as high risk CSE/CCE (11 CCE, 10 CSE or combination of both) and 42 as medium risk.
4.	The current Hampshire and IOW Police Problem profile compares threats and risks across the force area. This reports Southampton, Portsmouth and Havant as the districts having the greatest number of children at risk of CSE

	residing in their areas. The complex nature of criminality, transport links and varied community profiles (including perpetrators) all contribute to the increased level of understanding of the threat in these areas. This allows professionals to focus engagement and diversions towards those children most at risk. A higher percentage of Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) young males are criminally exploited: 26% of CCE flagged children are from BAME communities compared to 9% of the population. Those children flagged at risk of CSE are mainly white females around the age of 15 years.
5.	For 2019 the police recorded 1329 missing episodes for under 18s in Southampton. These involved 527 young people (this includes temporary residents of Southampton). This is a slight increase from the missing episodes and people reported in 2018. When intervening to support children at risk of exploitation missing episodes are commonly found to be precursors to exploitation and therefore accurate recording, assessment and engagement with children who go missing is crucial to understanding and managing the threat of exploitation as well as other forms of harm. Children's Social Care have a record of 619 missing episodes for children in the last 6 months.
6.	A significant proportion (20-25%) of all reported missing episodes in Southampton are children placed in the city by other local authorities (accounting for 146 of 619 missing episodes recorded by Children's Social Care in last 6 months – 23%). These children are treated in the same way by the Police, Health, schools & voluntary agencies but the Council has limited responsibilities as the 'host' local authority.
7.	Furthermore an assessment of those children identified at risk of exploitation commonly identifies other precursor traumatic events in their home life such as domestic abuse, being a victim of assault or being linked to drugs intelligence. All of this information is used to assess the risk to the young person. Hampshire police, Social care and other agencies are working to understand opportunities and implement systems of early intervention and engagement with these young people where data shows will be at risk due to their existing experiences.
Southampton response	
8.	Since 2015 Southampton City Council has had a dedicated team to promote the response to child sexual exploitation issues, and since Oct 2017 the remit of this team was extended to respond to missing children and those at risk of /experiencing criminal or sexual exploitation. The team was renamed the MET Hub and currently has 5 FTE staffing plus 1 FTE Lead/Assistant Manager. Being a 'MET' team allows a response to different risks in a more coordinated way and feedback from the recent Ofsted inspection has reflected the well-developed and effective nature of services and leadership delivered by the team in order to reduce MET risks to children.
9.	The MET Hub provide Return Interviews (RI) for children who have been missing from home or care (for Southampton children, including those in care placements within 30 miles of the city) in order to ensure SCC fulfils its statutory duty to offer Return Interviews to these children. Statutory guidance states these discussions should take place within 72 hours of the child's return from missing – this is a challenge due to slow reporting processes

	<p>between Police and Children’s Services, impact of weekends and limited capacity of MET Hub. In the last 6 months, for cases where RI deemed appropriate, they have been offered in relation to 450 of 452 missing episodes (99.5%), and gone on to be successfully completed with the young person in relation to 389 episodes (86%) – this is an extremely high uptake rate in comparison to other Local Authorities. The MET Hub Return Interview monthly uptake rate has been up to 96%. Return Interview offers for Children Looked After placed some distance from Southampton has also proved challenging due to logistics but rates for these children have significantly improved in line with overall rates (98% offer rate and 64% uptake rate in last 6 months). Ofsted feedback has commented on the effectiveness of the MET Hub Return Interviews and subsequent direct work to support families as well as “clear analysis of risks”. Their report further states that “arrangements for vulnerable groups of children who go missing and who may be at risk of exploitation are well developed and effective” including those living at home or in care.</p>
10.	<p>MET Hub gather significant intelligence from Return Interviews with children linked to missing/exploitation and other community issues which is shared with Hampshire Police to help inform the local picture – Police have commented on the quality of intel submitted by the MET Hub. There has also been a significant overall increase in intelligence submissions across partner agencies due to considerable efforts by both Police and partner agencies to promote use of the Community Partnership Information form.</p>
11.	<p>The MET Hub also provides intensive 1-1 support to those at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation, guided by the risks and vulnerabilities, and building on strengths and diversion. Both the recent Ofsted inspection and the HMIC inspection of the Youth Offending Service have commented in the effective and positive impact of the interventions from the MET Hub staff.</p>
12.	<p>Southampton’s response to MET issues was strengthened by the Council’s MET Procedures, developed in 2018. The Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) has been adapted to include indicators more aligned to CCE/county lines risks which is promoting increased recognition of young people at risk of CCE and also offers a contextual focus on peer groups and locations to aid disruption activity. As a result of this increased awareness and adaption of tools and processes there is positive identification of children at risk of both CSE and CCE and examples of planning and intervention which has assisted in reducing risks to them (recognised within Ofsted inspection).</p>
13.	<p>The Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & Southampton (HIPS) Child Exploitation Group provides a strategic lead on priorities and planning to improve the joint response to protecting children at risk of exploitation – Southampton has a strong representation on this group.</p>
14.	<p>In the city, the Council leads the Missing Exploited & Trafficked Operational Group and a monthly Case Review meeting focused on Southampton risk, intervention, planning and specifically assessing and reviewing the children at high risk of exploitation. Due to capacity the monthly Case Review cannot have oversight of the medium risk cohort which therefore is tracked and managed by the lead professional, usually the allocated social worker – this is recognised by Police and MET Hub as an area of vulnerability.</p>

15.	There are positive and effective working relationships between the respective Police and Children's Services MET Teams, and development activity focused on building collaboration with Neighbourhood Police Teams. Regular discussions take place in order to ensure coordinated responses to disrupt risks. The Police MET Team staff covering Southampton have been given access to the Civic building to strengthen joint working further.
16.	A number of recent and ongoing awareness raising activities are taking place within Southampton schools in relation to knife crime, gangs and exploitation. St Giles Trust delivers sessions in schools, including Compass PRU, supported by MET Hub staff. Workshops on both CSE and CCE are planned for all Year 10 students at Cantell School in Jan 2020. The work of the Violence Reduction Unit is already making a positive impact on promoting coordination across agencies and partners and supporting creative ways to respond to and prevent risks.
17.	The MET Hub lead on providing local training in relation to missing and exploitation risks to staff within SCC and some partner agencies. The capacity of the team does impact on their ability to meet this need however feedback on the quality of the training is consistently good.
Future plans to improve outcomes	
18.	There is a need to think differently and creatively about engaging with risks affecting adolescents, particularly those outside of the home.
19.	The city is currently planning to develop the MET offer in Southampton. This is designed to meet the compliance requirements, increased volume and focus of this important safeguarding work. The proposed development currently includes the addition/integration of social work, management and business support resource, as well as further alignment with the Police and increased integration with Youth Offending Service & Education Welfare whilst retaining the close operational relationship with the MASH and frontline social work teams.
20.	SCC applied for funding for a Frankie worker to strengthen local therapeutic support offered to children victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.
21.	Work is underway to look at ways to strengthen collaborative working and information sharing with Neighbourhood Police Teams.
22.	There is a drive to strengthen relationships with CAMHS and local youth organisations.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
23.	Not applicable.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
24.	Not applicable.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
25.	A range of statutory powers are relevant to child exploitation, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (DfE, 2014)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory guidance for local authorities on the care of unaccompanied migrant children and children victims of modern slavery (Dfe, 2017) • Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked Practice Guidance (DfE & Home Office, 2011) • Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners (DfE, 2017) • Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance (Home Office, 2018) • Modern Slavery Act 2015 • Working Together 2018 • Children Act 1989 • Children Act 2004 • Care Act 2014
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
26.	None
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
27.	None
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
28.	None
KEY DECISION	No
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	None directly as a result of this report
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Confidential - Initiatives to tackle child exploitation
Documents In Members' Rooms	
1.	None
Equality Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIA) to be carried out?	No
Data Protection Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out?	No
Other Background Documents	
Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:	
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	None