

Name of meeting: Children's Scrutiny Panel

Date: Friday 23rd August 2019

Title of report: Update on Exploitation Strategy and Next Steps

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work that has been undertaken in response to improving the quality of practice and to prevent children being at risk and vulnerable to harm and abuse from Exploitation and or from going missing from home or care.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes/ no or "not applicable" No If yes give the reason why .
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	Yes/ no or "not applicable" <i>Not applicable</i> If yes also give date it was registered
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes/ no or "not applicable" Not applicable If no give the reason why not
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services? Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	12/08/19 Mel Meggs Strategic Director For Children's Services N/A N/A
Cabinet member portfolio	N/A

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: All

Public or private: Public

1. Summary

- 1.1 The report updates members on the progress made regarding the arrangements that have been put in place to safeguard some of the most vulnerable children and young people living in Kirklees.
- 1.2 The world of Safeguarding is becoming increasingly complex. As our knowledge and understanding of the complexities of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has developed, it is recognised that CSE cannot be seen or responded to in isolation. CSE is often closely linked to peer on peer violence and abuse, modern day slavery, harmful sexual behaviour, gang and group activity, criminal exploitation, and going missing from home or care, creating a set of harmful circumstances and experiences for children, young people, families and communities.
- 1.3 Working Together 2018 reflects the required changes of traditional child safeguarding practice and provides an overview of the need for professionals, agencies and partnerships to adopt a more contextual safeguarding approach.

“As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online”.

- 1.4 The Contextual Safeguarding approach developed at the University of Bedfordshire has been adopted by Kirklees Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (KSCP) Exploitation Strategic and Operational groups to develop and inform practice. A Contextual Safeguarding approach provides a framework to advance child protection and safeguarding responses to extra-familial risks that children and young people may encounter. The approach provides an understanding of, and response to, children and young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families, including the spaces they frequent, the influence of peers and young people’s safety in their relationships and environments.
- 1.5 Contextual Safeguarding takes account of the impact of public and social contexts on children’s and young people’s lives, the interplay between these different contexts and relationships, and how they can impact on their safety. It recognises that the different relationships that children form with their peers and adults in their communities, schools and online can feature violence and abuse, and that parents and carers may have little influence over these contexts, with the ‘weight of influence’ often being outside of the family. Whilst, experiences of extra-familial abuse can weaken parent/carer-child relationships.
- 1.6 Locally, there have been a number of significant non recent investigations into the criminal and sexual exploitation of children, particularly young girls. In addition we have seen an increase in the affiliation of our children and young people to Urban Street Gangs and as a consequence, involvement in Organised Crime and criminal exploitation, particularly with regards to movement and supply of controlled drugs.
- 1.7 By widening the operational response to child sexual exploitation, children are viewed and responded to in the context of their lived reality and not simply in the context of the presenting risk, vulnerability or harm. In order to do this effectively the strategic

approach to developing practice is committed to children and young people being seen, heard and supported:

- **Seen:** in the context of their lives at home, friendship circles, health, education and public spaces (including social media).
- **Heard:** to effectively protect children and young people, professionals need to take time to hear what children are saying, put themselves in the child or young person's shoes and think about what their life might truly be like.
- **Supported:** by remaining professionally curious and by implementing effective and imaginative solutions that help children and young people.

1.8 Risk and vulnerability of children and young people is now better understood through the lens of Contextual Safeguarding and this approach is outlined in the KSCP Exploitation Strategy 2019 -2021 which is underpinned by the KSCP Exploitation Operational Action Plan. Both documents focus on a 4 P's model of Prevent, Prepare, Protect, and Pursue; outlining the strategic aims to develop multi-agency responses to enhance early identification, and support for children and young people, families and communities, protection of children and young people, early identification of locations of concern where exploitation and abuse is perpetrated, and the disruption, diversion and prosecution of individuals or groups who seek to facilitate and or exploit, abuse and harm children and young people.

1.9 **Prevent:** to prevent children, young people and vulnerable adults experiencing or continuing to experience, exploitation, harm and abuse by ensuring effective awareness-raising and preventative work is in place across the locality, staff benefit from quality learning and development opportunities and that there is an effective response to information and intelligence, that identifies individuals, groups or locations of concern, and highlights patterns or trends.

Prepare: to develop a comprehensive and accurate intelligence picture which will inform local partnership understanding of context, and locations of concern to enable swift coordinated multi-agency responses to safeguard children and prevent, divert or prosecute those who seek to facilitate and /or perpetrate exploitation, abuse and harm.

Protect: to develop effective child centred practice and service provision, to protect children, young people, vulnerable adults, families and communities, and ensure positive outcomes for all, whilst empowering individuals to build resilient communities.

Pursue: use information intelligently to assess and intervene with contexts and groups, to safeguard children and young people and prosecute those who seek to facilitate and /or perpetrate exploitation, abuse and harm; ensuring that a holistic, person centred approach, from intervention, to where necessary prosecution, is adopted and employed.

2. Background

2.1 In Kirklees, a wide range of agencies work in partnership to reduce and respond to Child Exploitation. This has been the case for several years and Child Exploitation remains a priority for Kirklees Council as well as the Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Partnership. There is clear leadership and strategic overview of services.

- 2.2 A review of services and the response to Child Sexual Exploitation was undertaken by the Leeds Improvement Partnership and partner agencies in December 2017. The review highlighted child sexual exploitation was strongly linked other factors that place children and young people at significant risk such as, missing from home or care, peer sexual violence, criminal exploitation, and child trafficking. To help effectively respond to the complexities of Child Exploitation the Risk and Vulnerability Team was established to provide, and allow for the advancement of identification, and multi-agency practice. The Risk and Vulnerability Team is working in partnership with key partners in the identification, prevention, disruption and prosecution of child exploitation.
- 2.3 The team is building better links with the local communities and organisations. Together, they are supporting the most vulnerable young people who are at risk from CSE, Missing and Child Criminal Exploitation. This has strengthened partnership working with the police and community safety and has increased the understanding of other services in Kirklees that work with children and young people at risk of, or who are experiencing exploitation. The work of the team is supported by a revised Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) pathway, process and response, which is overseen by a Senior Manager in Children's Social Care. MACE meetings are held monthly to provide multi-agency oversight of Child Exploitation cases and ensure appropriate service response. Alongside the MACE process a Single Point of Contact for all partnership Child Exploitation concerns and referrals is under development.
- 2.4 The new systems and processes are assisting to improve the quality of data held in relation to Child Exploitation. This is supporting improved responses and monitoring whilst helping to identifying trends and inform strategic planning.
- 2.5 The Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care services June 2019 noted that;
- There is... effective collaboration to address the growing emergence of gang-related activity and child exploitation.*
- The work of the multi-agency risk and vulnerability team is starting to embed, and the response to exploitation is better coordinated. There has been demonstrable success in diverting young people away from crime, including working with those involved in gangs and knife crime. The response to child sexual exploitation is well coordinated to mitigate risk. As a result, the circumstances of many of these children are improving*
- 2.6 The development of the Risk and Vulnerability team has been successful in that it has catered for effective multi-agency response to Child Exploitation whilst also recognising the need to respond strategically and in line with legislation and statutory guidance.
- 2.7 To further assist the development of practice, KSCP commissioned a review of the current partnership practice and response to child sexual exploitation. This was undertaken by the National Working Group CSE Response Unit (<https://www.nwgnetwork.org/>) in February /March 2019, the review identified key areas of focus going forward, including;
- Reviewing the current training offer; whilst the review noted that there is a comprehensive training offer in Kirklees which offers multi-agency training including sessions on trauma-informed practice and an understanding of wider

forms of exploitation, it was noted that this could be enhanced by providing training to front line staff who complete CSE risk assessments to provide them with the relevant knowledge and support that they need.

- Reviewing the impact of the training delivered to staff regarding consent and referrals.
- Supporting the Contextual Safeguarding approach with a 'Trauma Informed' approach to exploitation.
- Building upon the work with children and young people identified as at low risk of exploitation, and a transition process to adult services, strengthening the response to online exploitation and abuse, and youth engagement and the engagement of families and communities, to ensure that their voices are at the heart of safeguarding practice.

2.8 Areas highlighted by the National working Group review have been progressed. A revised exploitation Risk assessment has been introduced and the KSCP has Contextual Safeguarding Learning and Development opportunities available for practitioners to attend in 2019/20.

2.9 For many children young people and survivors who are traumatised, the behaviours they display, which can be viewed as challenging, are behaviours / ways they have adopted to try and protect themselves. To effectively work with traumatised young people and survivors of child sexual abuse in a trauma informed way, requires a commitment to relationship-based practice, to enable young people and survivors, to recognise how their past experiences can influence how they relate to people, relationships and situations in the present day. Trauma Informed practice also requires the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making, individuals' strengths are recognised, built on, within an individualised approach. Trauma Informed practice therefore needs to provide spaces and relationships where children, young people and survivors can explore their understanding. Developing service responses based on the needs of young people and survivors as identified by them, including peer mentoring and support is crucial to the approach. The approach strengthens the Councils commitment to Restorative Practice

2.10 Children's Social care (CSC) has established a working group, to work with survivors of child sexual exploitation and voluntary sector organisations, to provide a Trauma informed service response, inclusive of group work, and opportunities for peer mentoring. This work is progressing and it is intended that a service response will be in place in 2019. CSC are also currently exploring funding opportunities to enable Trauma Informed practice to be embedded with all children at risk of, vulnerable to exploitation.

2.11 Recognising that the harm and abuse associated with exploitation does not stop when a child approaches adulthood, Children's Social Care in partnership with Adult Social Care and the Adults Safeguarding Board are developing a clear transition pathway and service offer for young people at risk /vulnerable to exploitation, and those who have experienced exploitation, who are approaching their 18th birthday. The aim is to provide a seamless service for young people and adults up to their 25th birthday. Partners from children's services and adult services will work together to consider the needs of young adults and any transitional issues, recognising how childhood trauma can impact on adult behaviours, presentation, and decision making.

3 Implications for the Council

3.1 Not applicable

4. **Consultees and their opinions**

Not applicable

5. **Next steps**

5.1 To introduce a Trauma informed service response, for survivors of child sexual exploitation.

5.2 To develop a clear transition pathway and service offer for young people at risk and vulnerable to exploitation, and those who have experienced exploitation who are approaching their 18th birthday.

5.3 To strengthen the Risk and Vulnerability Team response within the context of a Youth Practice Model, to include:

- Ensuring that robust multi-agency needs led risk management plans are in place that give full consideration to a child's vulnerability and need factors and help practice improve to include a coordinated, effectively actioned strengths-based approach, and where relevant compliment statutory child protection processes.
- Strengthening the response to all children who go missing from home and care, to ensure that all children receive high quality, robust return interviews; maximise opportunities to better understand push and pull trends; manage risk; impact positively on disruption activity and identify themes to inform strategic planning.
- Supporting the wider partnership to continue to develop 'profiles' relating to individuals and or groups who exploit and abuse, to enable the partnership to utilise these to effectively target resources and interventions and help safeguard children.
- Working with partners in the Early Support Service to ensure an effective pathway and escalation process for children assessed as at 'low risk' of exploitation.
- Within the MACE process, work with partners to proactively respond to information and intelligence shared to effectively safeguard children and young people and successful divert, apprehend and prosecute these who seek to exploit.
- Working with partners to strengthen the response to children who are both a victim and perpetrator of exploitation, harm and abuse and ensure those children receive child centred responses, assessments and interventions.
- Coordinating clear pathways to centrally collate feedback received from children and families; to ensure that reality of children's experiences inform and enhance strategic knowledge.

5.4 The focus of the KSCP Annual Conference in November 2019 is Exploitation and Violence. This will provide an opportunity for practitioners across the partnership to build upon their knowledge and understanding when responding to Child Exploitation.

5.5 To further support the development of practice, the theme for the Children's Social Care Celebrating Social Work Conference in September 2019 is "Understanding Risk", this will aid to strengthen Contextual Safeguarding practice across the wider Children's Social work workforce.

5.6 Kirklees Council, with partners, is key to driving forward the improvement, innovation and practice development in relation to our response to children and young people at

risk of, vulnerable to exploitation and those who have or are experiencing harm and abuse through exploitation. To ensure that we deliver on the agreed priorities for improving multi-agency working and effectively safeguard children and young people from exploitation requires continued commitment and support from elected members, and the wider community.

6. **Officer recommendations and reasons**

Not applicable

7. **Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations**

Not applicable

8. **Contact officer**

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9. **Background Papers and History of Decisions**

9.1 Not applicable

10. **Service Director responsible**

Elaine McShane

Service Director

Family Support and Child Protection